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THE PORTRAITS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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THE PORTRAITS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

By HENRY SLOANE COFFIN

MINISTER IN THE MADISON AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
AND PROFESSOR IN THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
NEW YORK CITY

Christus ist nicht der Lehrer wie man zu sagen pflegt; Christus nicht der Stifter; Er ist der Inhalt des Christentums.—Schelling

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To

WILLIAM RAYMOND JELLIFFE

and

GEORGE STEWART

My Colleagues in the pastorate
of the
Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church

PREFACE

In the theological discussions of the day, one frequently hears the expression—"the Christ of the New Testament." Those who use the phrase apparently mean that there is a conception of Him which includes every item in every book. But no such combination exists in the New Testament itself. It presents us with a number of portraits, differing in many details, and makes no attempt to harmonize them. Behind them all is the historic Jesus with the religious impression which He produced on those who knew Him, and His living Spirit in the lives of those who received this impression and interpreted it in their writings. But they depict Him against differing backgrounds and from differing viewpoints.

In all of these portraits He is the central and final Figure in God's Self-revelation—the Lord and Saviour of men. This He has always been, and is, in the experience and life of the Church.

But in current discussions a particular interpretation of the manner of His birth, or of the meaning of His cross, or of the mode of His resurrection, is often called "essential," or "a fundamental of New Testament Christianity." It is well to notice that New Testament writers give various explanations of our Lord's origin, and death, and of His life thereafter. While it would be fallacious to argue that a writer is ignorant of an event, or does not accept an interpretation, which he fails to mention, still each was trying to present a whole Christ to his readers. He was not aware that he was contributing to a collection of writings, so that his omissions would be filled in by others. We are, therefore, not justified in terming items, which

several of them think unnecessary to include, "fundamentals of New Testament Christianity." What is essential is found in them all.

The following chapters were preached as sermons, not to build up a systematic doctrine of Christ's Person, but to present Him in each of the eight portraits, and to bring out in each the elements most appealing to present thought and most satisfying to our spiritual need. They make no pretence at original scholarship; they are an attempt to bring the learning of scholars to plain folk.

In his preface to a collection of *Best Sermons of 1925,* Dr. J. Fort Newton remarks that expository preaching is "well-nigh impossible in America." But a congregation, widely representative of the mixed population of New York City, bore with the sermons that follow, which are nothing but expositions of New Testament delineations of Christ. Surely the Bible is the most fascinating of books, and the most enriching sermons are those which expound its thought and pass on its wealth of life with God. Expository preaching demands mental effort on the part of listeners; but "painless preaching" cannot long hold the thoughtful, nor produce intelligent and informed followers of Christ. Too much has been said about prophetic ministers. No prophet undertook to preach twice every seventh day. A minister of the Gospel may prophesy on occasion; but his steady duty is to teach "every man in all wisdom" that he may "present every man mature in Christ."

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THE PORTRAITS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHAPTER I

THE PORTRAIT IN THE EARLIEST PREACHING

The early chapters of the Book of Acts contain the account of the first preaching about Jesus done by His followers immediately after the close of His own earthly career. The book was not itself written until many years later, but scholars think that behind the Greek of its early narratives they can detect Aramaic documents, and these may well be recollections of the members of the Christian community at Jerusalem, later used by the historian in compiling his account. And in any case the thought in these chapters appears untouched by later developments, and so seems to reflect accurately what the first witnesses said of their Master.

How, then, did they picture Him? Against what background did they place His portrait? In what pose did they draw His figure?

At Pentecost we hear Peter saying: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." Again in another speech, we hear Peter speaking of "Jesus whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things." And when Stephen is being stoned to death, it is significant of the portrait of Christ which was habitually in his mind, that he sees "the heavens opened,

and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." The Jesus whom they portray is the risen and exalted Christ, at God's right hand in the heavens.

They supply His portrait with two backgrounds. The first is the background of a national history. He is the long-promised Messiah, "the Christ who hath been *appointed* for you." They dwell upon the expectation of believers in Israel's past: "Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren. Unto you first God, having raised up His Servant, sent Him to bless you." They took colors out of that background in which to paint His figure. They applied to Him such titles as Prophet, the Servant of the Lord, the Anointed. They set Him forth with the long vista of wistful ages behind Him.

And the second background with which they supplied His portrait was the heavens into which He had now been received. They did not think of Him, as we might have expected, in the associations of Galilee and of the Upper Room at Jerusalem; they thought of Him as set in majesty on high. They did not look back and paint His figure in the light of their memories. They looked up and pictured Him in the glory of their present faith and future hope. The familiar human scenes, in which they had been His comrades, seem almost completely lost sight of. They have been for the moment obliterated by the radiant glory which streams from His conquest of death and His entrance into the realms of light. They portray him in the loftiest place in the universe, side by side with the Most High God.

They have not altogether forgotten His earthly career. They speak of him as "Jesus of Nazareth," as "a Man approved by God," a prophet raised up "from among His brethren," "the Pioneer of life"—a very suggestive title recalling a frontiersman who advances the boundaries of habitable territory beyond any point

hitherto reached and opens up new tracts of existence, new regions of spiritual life, for his followers. They recall that He "went about doing good," healing and performing other mighty works. They dwell particularly upon His cruelly unmerited death: "Him ye by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay." That had been an experience of tragic disappointment and of horror for them; but now in the light of His enthronement and against the background of history they had begun to explain it to themselves and to find it part of God's plan. They mused over the Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah, written originally of Israel, the Servant Nation, and they saw in it a striking anticipation of the sufferings and death of their Master. Jesus was the true Servant of the Lord. While His death was due to the lawless hands of men, it was no accident upsetting the divine purpose. "Him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Philip explains the Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah to the Ethiopian eunuch as a picture of the redemptive suffering of Jesus. That background of history made the cross stand forth in glorious light: "The things which God foreshadowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled."

But all that He underwent in His earthly experience was merely preliminary to His present exalted life. Peter is voicing the faith of his fellow-believers when he said: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made Him Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging Him on a tree. Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour." And they ascribe to Him one more august rôle reserved for the future: "This is He which is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead."

It is a regal portrait, a Figure set amid the splendor of

the heavens and with the sweep of the ages stretching off in the distance and finding their culmination in His reign. To be sure we are profoundly thankful that it is not the only portrait that we have of Jesus. We should miss incalculably much. These earliest descriptions do not quote a single saying of His. They do not draw for us any scene in His ministry. His human figure is so swathed in the robes of His kingly glory that we gain scarcely any impression of His character. But He stands before us in the triumphant majesty in which He was pictured by the faith of those who had passed through the disaster of Calvary and knew the victory of His resurrection and the experience of His empowering gift of the Spirit.

If we scan this portrait to inquire how they accounted for Jesus, we notice that there is no allusion to His pre-existence in heaven or to His coming to earth. They think of Him as "raised up from among His brethren." Nor do they mention anything unusual in connection with His birth. They are entirely silent upon His origin: if they knew anything surprising about it, they did not deem it essential to tell it. They portray Him as "a Man approved of God," "anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power." They explain His marvellous works by saying simply, "God was with Him." It may be going too far to say that they did not consider Him the Messiah while He was on earth; but their language implies that it was by His resurrection and exaltation that He was given His unique office: "God made Him both Lord and Christ"; "Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins."

From these expressions we cannot deduce how they thought of Jesus' relation to God. But what a tribute to the impression which He made upon these intimate associates that they should feel no incongruity in placing their

Friend at God's right hand! As Jews they had been brought up in the strictest monotheism. The chief article of their creed ran: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." But the only appropriate spot in the universe which they could find for the Comrade with whom they had broken bread and walked along dusty roads was on the same throne with the God of all. By the same religious instinct they were worshippers of one God and of Jesus.

It is sometimes thought that Jesus was revered by His first followers as a supreme Teacher, and that only by subsequent generations who had never known Him in the flesh was He adored as Divine. But here is the earliest portrait which we possess of Him, earlier than that in any of the gospels. The Teacher is entirely lost sight of; one would not know that He had taught at all. It is the Divine Saviour and Lord who commands their loyalty. Our age stresses the humanity of Jesus and finds difficulty in believing Him to be Divine. The First Century never seems to have had any difficulty with His Divinity. The earliest heresies were denials of His manhood. The Jesus who gained the allegiance of hundreds in Jerusalem and in the towns of Palestine and in Gentile Antioch was not pictured to them as the wisest and best of men. He was the Anointed of God, the Messiah who had triumphed over death and was exalted to the heavens.

If we ask how they conceived His relation with His followers, it would seem that they felt that He was separated from them. The heaven had "received" Him, and He was hid from them for a while. It was natural to men who had known His physical presence to feel themselves parted from Him when they could no longer see and hear Him. But He remained a dominant influence in those who had been His companions. Men "took knowledge" of Peter and John "that they had been with Jesus." And it is worth noting that the characteristic in them

which recalled their association with Jesus was their "boldness"—a quality we rarely consider distinctive of Jesus. They wrought mighty works "in His name"—and according to the ideas of that day when a god was summoned by name, he was thought of as responding and coming to assist His devotees. Using the name of Jesus would give them a sense of His continuing fellowship and activity through them. Supremely they thought of Him as sending down His Spirit, the Spirit of God, upon them. This had been the source of His own power; now, exalted, He pours forth the same gift on them. He was absent in the heavens until a hoped-for time—"The great Restoration," they called it. But meanwhile He was not out of touch with them. Through His potent name they wrought works akin to His, and He was giving them His Spirit which produced their ecstatic enthusiasm, uttering itself in tongues, and their fellowship of brotherly love.

What shall we say of this portrait of Jesus? Were we to take it too literally, it would be impossible for us, for we do not localize heaven and think of God as a human Figure on a throne. Nor should we be prepared to admit that Jesus was partially absent, withdrawn from us in the skies. But faith must always think in pictures, and we must recognize what this portrait did for these early Christians. It made their faith a world-religion. If His disciples had looked back upon their Master and recalled Him only in the setting of His early career in Palestine, He would have remained a Jewish Figure inextricably bound up with His own people. When they thought of Him as enthroned with God, it became possible for them to believe that He was for every nation. He was lifted out of the confining limitations of a single race and locality; He became accessible to mankind. Peter speaking of Jesus to Cornelius, interjects, "He is Lord

of all." This is the picture of Jesus which began the missionary career of the Church.

What, then, is its permanent value to Christians?

In the first place it sets forth Jesus as a Contemporary, not as a memory. There are many Christians still for whom Jesus is a Figure of the long ago. They associate Him only with the customs and thought and life of a bygone age; they do not connect Him with the happenings of today, nor fit Him into the life of our time. This robs Him of worth as an ideal and guide for the present. They say with Palgrave

> Dim tracts of time divide
> Those golden days from me;
> Thy voice comes strange o'er years of change;
> How can I follow Thee?
>
> Comes faint and far Thy voice
> From vales of Galilee;
> Thy vision fades in ancient shades;
> How should we follow Thee?

Even to most earnest and thoughtful Christians the conviction that Christ is alive comes as a startling discovery. A generation ago, one of the most eminent British preachers, Dr. Dale of Birmingham, tells how this truth broke on him.

> He was writing an Easter sermon, and when halfway through, the thought of the risen Lord broke in upon him as it had never done before. "Christ is alive," I said to myself; "alive!" and then I paused;—"alive!" and then I paused again; "alive! Can that really be true? Living as really as I myself am?" I got up and walked about repeating "Christ is living! Christ is living!" At first it seemed strange and hardly true, but at last it came upon me as a burst of sudden glory; yes, Christ is living. It was to me a new discovery. I thought that all along I

had believed it; but not until that moment did I feel sure about it.

However we conceive our world—and the symbolism of the New Testament faith is still probably as vivid a picture as we can place before the eyes of our hearts—we must link a living and contemporary Jesus with the circumstances of our times and think of Him as moving in it, its rightful although largely unacknowledged Lord. We must set Him, not back in First Century Palestine, but here amid and over Twentieth Century America and our present world.

Again, placing Jesus at the right hand of God—the hand with which He works—helped them, and may help us, to Christianize our thought of God. We cannot think of God as doing anything into which Jesus does not fully enter. We can never attribute to Him aught that is unchristlike. We often ascribe to God acts which we should never dream of ascribing to Jesus. The result is that God is represented as scarcely a Christian. A devastating storm or a destructive earthquake is imputed to His providence; a war or an epidemic is called His visitation. Obviously if this be His world, He is chargeable with at least the possibility of these grim occurrences; but that He deliberately arranges and causes them is another matter. We live in an as-yet-unfinished world. There is always some risk in walking about a building still in process of erection. Ladders or temporary steps are not as safe as a stairway, nor are planks set down upon beams to be compared with a well laid floor. We may say that it is the Architect's fault that we are exposed to such hazards; but suppose we are His fellow-workmen, how can He use us to build with Him and not subject us to the dangers of the uncompleted structure? If we set Jesus at His right hand we must not place to God's account any act with which Jesus is not in heartiest sympathy. Whatever happenings may befall us in this period of construction—

and the city of God is not yet here—and whatever tragic consequences may be due to the ignorance or selfishness of sinful men, we will not debase our thought of God. We shall keep Him as lofty in motive and as loving in heart as Jesus; we cannot conceive Him higher or better. When we think of Jesus as at God's right hand, we do not so much exalt Jesus as exalt our thought of God. With His right hand God is ever busied in that, and that only, which Jesus heartily shares with Him.

Again, it serves to render the remotest spot in the universe homelike. The unseen so easily becomes the uncanny. But with Jesus in the mysterious heavens, and with Jesus sharing every act of the living God, there is no strange and foreign region in the visible or the invisible. Perhaps we may make vivid to ourselves the feelings of these early believers by recalling some lines which Tennyson wrote of his dead friend, Hallam. The outlook of these early Christians cannot have been altogether dissimilar. The poet, addressing his former comrade, writes:

> Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
> Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
> Behold, I dream a dream of good,
> And mingle all the world with thee.
>
> Thy voice is on the rolling air;
> I hear thee where the waters run;
> Thou standest in the rising sun,
> And in the setting thou art fair.
>
> What art thou, then? I cannot guess;
> But tho' I seem in star and flower
> To feel thee some diffusive power,
> I do not therefore love thee less.

The universe to its utmost bound becomes a Christian's home when he pictures Jesus as everywhere sharing its control. We think of God somewhat differently from these First Century believers. We do not locate Him in

a heaven and regard Him as sundered from us. God is to us the Life, the Order, the Beauty, of the world, the controlling and resident Spirit behind and in all things. And if we associate Jesus with Him, there is no spot in creation from which Jesus is debarred, and no situation in which we cannot place ourselves under His control. As these believers used the name of Jesus and felt confident that He wrought with them in power, so we apply the Spirit of Jesus to every problem or ordeal, and are sure that the force of the universe is in alliance with us.

Finally, this portrait of the enthroned Jesus gave them their program for the Church. One might fancy that to picture Jesus as a Sovereign would ease His followers from effort. God had placed the crown on His forehead; they need not trouble themselves. But they saw this portrait of their Lord as God's plan which they must bring to pass.

In the ceiling of one of the old baptisteries in Ravenna there is a mosaic of an empty throne. I do not know for what that symbol originally stood; but to me it suggested the place of universal control God meant for Christ where Christians must seat Him—Lord of their lives and Lord of the whole world.

CHAPTER II

THE PORTRAIT IN THE LETTERS OF PAUL

As momentous as Jesus' entry into any town or city—Nazareth or Capernaum or Jerusalem—was His entry into the life of Saul of Tarsus; and as striking as any series of events in His ministry on earth is His work in the soul of Saul. For out of that experience of Christ within him came the letters which form so much of our New Testament, and furnish us with a portrait of Jesus which has carried Him into countless Christian hearts.

Paul took over the portrait of the Master which had been drawn by the earlier disciples. He, too, saw Jesus against the background of a long history. "How many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea." This brilliant and earnest young Pharisee, educated in Gamaliel's classroom, familiar with the hope of Israel, became convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and naturally painted Him in the colors of the Jewish anticipation. He is "Christ," "the Son of God." But Jesus had upset expectations in fulfilling them, and the Christ Paul knew in Jesus was vastly better than the Christ he had looked for.

And like the earlier preachers, Paul portrays Jesus against a background of heavenly splendor. He is the living and exalted Lord. "God raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come, and He put all

things in subjection under His feet." If Paul mentions an event in the past career of Jesus, like the cross, he is quick to turn his readers' minds from it to His present glory. "It is Christ Jesus that died, *yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God.*"

Paul goes farther than the earlier preachers. They had said nothing of Christ's origin; but Paul pictures Him not merely as entering the heavens after His resurrection. He comes from heaven where He existed "in the form of God." In language which he borrowed from Jewish thinkers Paul pictures Him as "the Firstborn of all creation," and the principle by which the entire universe holds together: "In Him all things consist." Jesus is not only the Messiah to whom Israel looked wistfully forward during centuries; all through their history He was an unsuspected spiritual presence with them. In the wilderness "they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ."

But the distinctive background with which Paul supplies the portrait of Jesus is his own heart and the hearts of believing men and women: "Christ liveth in me," "Christ in you," "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." This is not a portrait which others had drawn for him. On that memorable day when a light had blinded his eyes as he traveled by the Damascus Road, God had shone in his heart. You remember how he himself describes what happened: "It was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in me." Jesus was to him "a life-giving Spirit," who made him a new man, fearlessly confident in God and with a passion to make the whole world Christ's.

This Jesus who had flashed upon Paul's soul was a heavenly Being—"the Lord of glory." As we read Paul's letters we learn very little about Jesus' earthly life. One or two of His sayings are quoted: Christ's teaching about divorce, for example. And the saying, not found

in any of the four Gospels, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," we owe to a speech of Paul's. He gives in detail the account of the Lord's Supper, of which he had been told by those who were present in the Upper Room. But scarcely anything else in the life of Jesus is referred to. Paul says explicitly that he was not interested in knowing Christ "after the flesh." The two events on which Paul dwells are the death on the cross and especially the resurrection. It had been Jesus' execution as a criminal which had made the new faith odious to this devout Jew. It had seemed nothing less than blasphemous to him that men in Jerusalem spoke of the Nazarene, who had been hanged up by the Romans on a cross outside the city, as God's anointed King. It had been so horrible to him that he had volunteered to root out this accursed sect, and had been head and front of the persecution. As for the stories of Jesus' resurrection, they had been idle tales invented by deceivers. Jesus had been buried, and Paul was resolved to bury all who believed in Him. Then suddenly the risen and exalted Jesus had laid hold on him. Paul's mind was filled with these facts that Jesus had died and been buried and had been raised from the dead. They so engrossed his interest that he could speak of little else. They were of such overwhelming importance that nothing else seemed to matter.

Paul admits us to his own mind when he puts the order of these events first the resurrection, then the death of Christ: "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." It was only because Jesus had risen that Paul could think of His sufferings as worth knowing. At one time the cross has been to him, as to any right-minded Jew, "a stumbling-block." Now that Jesus lived in power for him, it became the chief means by which the world was

saved. "Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

While, then, we find few details of Jesus' earthly career in the portrait given us by Paul, and mainly these crowning events, the resurrection and the cross, the character of Jesus stands out plainly in his picture. He tells us little of what Jesus said or did, but he tells us much of what Jesus was. He appeals to the Corinthians "by the gentleness and reasonableness of Christ." He writes the Philippians that he feels towards them with the affectionate heart of Christ. He urges strong Christians to bear the loads of the weak, because "Christ pleased not Himself." He bids men give generously because for our sakes Christ "became poor." We may be sure that Paul never forgot what he learned from Peter and James on that first visit when, a distrusted convert, he had gone up to Jerusalem, nor what he learned from others who had companied with Jesus. He asked his converts to copy him as he copied Christ. The memory of what Jesus had been was always before his eyes. We feel that he was looking at the figure of Jesus when he penned the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians. He got his conception of what love is and does, because Jesus had lived and died. Although he does not mention His name, this chapter is a portrait of Christ.

No man has more accurately grasped the mind of Christ, although he is so little interested in the details of His earthly career. And it is significant that when Paul tries to portray that mind, he does not refer to something which Jesus did in Galilee or quote some of His sayings. He does not write: "Have in you the mind of Him who washed His disciples' feet," or "of Him who said, I am in the midst of you as One that serveth." He illustrates Christ's mind by setting forth the career of this heavenly Being who "existing in the form of God, emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto

death, yea, the death of the cross." It is the background of heaven, with the dark cross as the most obtrusive fact in the foreground, that is ever before Paul's eyes.

And the chief characteristic of this Christ for Paul is His amazing love: "Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me;" "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." The chief thing in the world for which a man must strive is love. It is the fulfilling of every law; and it is the mightiest force in the universe because it brought Jesus to die. And this love of Jesus is for Paul a window through which he looks into the ultimate fact of existence: it shows him God. "The love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Calvary is not the devotion of Jesus only: "God commendeth *His own* love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Converted as Paul had been, not by the human Jesus, but by a heavenly Being, he stresses Christ's connection with God. He is "the Son of His love," His "image" (a phrase which we still employ when we speak of a boy as the living image of his father) in whose face God's glory shines and in whom in bodily presence God's fulness dwells. Paul knows that Jesus was true Man. He dwells on His human descent from David, and speaks of Him as "born of a woman." He does not mention a miraculous birth, nor does He tell us how He became Man. He uses the expression "He emptied Himself," on which some theologians have tried to build a theory of the incarnation; but that phrase, if you press it too far, only confuses us. We cannot conceive anyone emptying His mind of knowledge or His spirit of power. And we must remember that Paul used it in a practical, not a theoretical, connection. People were quarrelling in the Philippian Church, and Paul felt that, like most quarrels, this was due to their taking themselves too seriously and being self-important. Paul pleads with them to do nothing in

pride, but in lowliness of mind to count others better than themselves. Then he adds: "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who emptied Himself." We know well the spirit he was trying to foster; we are left in the dark as to how He who came from heaven became One like ourselves.

It is the human life of Jesus which we most miss in Paul's portrait. He tells us nothing of Jesus' struggles and temptations, nothing of His prayers. Once he remarks that "He was crucified through weakness," but he never dwells on the heroism and effort and faith of Jesus. Had we Paul's portrait only, we should never know that Jesus Himself had a religious experience, that He walked by faith, that He had questions to solve and obstacles to overcome and temptation to grapple with. A man must paint what he sees, and to Paul Jesus is a triumphant Spirit, who had once taken on our human flesh and suffered, but was at His resurrection "designated the Son of God with power."

And in His power, He does not remain aloof from sinning men; He comes, as Paul had felt Him come on the Damascus Road, and lays hold of our inmost being and possesses us. Paul's commonest description of a Christian is "a man in Christ." He is employing a phrase which was familiar in that age when men believed in spirts who came and took possession of human beings and dwelt in them. One thinks of the demoniacs in the Gospels. Jesus, this mighty and loving Spirit, controls and possesses the lives of those who yield themselves to His sway. Paul cannot find language too strong to tell us that Christ becomes dominant at the center of a Christian's personality, the well-spring of his motives and energies. "Christ who is our life," he writes.

And when Christ thus possesses us, we repeat the two great experiences of Jesus' career as Paul thinks of them —His death and resurrection. "I am crucified with

Christ," "If ye then be risen with Christ." This may seem exaggerated speech. But think how love makes two lives one, so that each seems to share the experiences of the other! Are there not mothers who in a very real sense go to boarding-school or to college with their sons or daughters, although they may never see the actual school buildings or college campus, where son or daughter is? Their hearts are with them. They sympathize in their disappointments; they share their happinesses. When they go on to see their children graduate, they seem to know the scene already and to be acquainted with their children's friends. They have been living not only their own life at home, but living this school or college life. So Paul felt that he died to the forces which killed Jesus, and he rose to the life Jesus ever lives with God.

And Jesus was to him not just a personal Friend with whom he was closely knit by cords of sympathy. He was the second Adam, the Founder of a new race of men. Whatever Jesus gained, He passed on by spiritual inheritance to His followers. Think of the famous saying: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." A man can choose the stream of spiritual heredity which he wishes to have flow in his soul. If he chooses Adam, the natural life of selfish and sinning men, then he has in himself the seeds of death. If he chooses Christ, then he dies to sin and is alive to all for which Christ lives.

You remember Marc Antony's oft-quoted speech in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar:*

> I tell you that which you yourselves do know;
> Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
> And bid them speak for me. . . . .
>
> O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
> Then *I, and you, and all of us fell down,*
> While bloody treason flourish'd over us.

So Paul would say that while Christ was nailed on the cross, all His followers throughout the ages died, while murderous sin flourished and had its day of power. And when Christ conquered death, all His followers rise with Him to His deathless life of love in God. "Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Paul sometimes uses the phrase "my gospel," as though out of his own experience of Jesus Christ he could pen an evangel all his own. And he did. His portrait of Christ is that of the crucified and risen Lord who becomes the inmost Life of a believer's heart and leads that man through His own death to sin and into His own life with God.

And what is that portrait's special value to us?

First, its insistence that every Christian must be himself the holy land where Christ is born, and where He dwells. Paul tells the Galatians that he is in travail for them "until Christ be formed in you." We may wish that Paul had told us more of the Jesus of history. How many things he must have picked up from the Christians whom he persecuted, and later from the apostles with whom he spent enriching days, which he never put into any of his letters! But let us remember the limits of history. We may know a great deal about what happened in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago, and not be any more Christian for that knowledge. We may know relatively little about history, and yet have caught from the little we know of the career of Jesus the spirit of His life. It is not the amount of our information, but the responsiveness of our hearts to the impression Jesus makes, which counts. Entirely in line with Paul's thought, a mystic poet of the Seventeenth Century, first a Lutheran and later a Roman Catholic, Johannes Scheffler, has written:

> Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
> If He's not born in thee, thy soul is still forlorn.

The cross on Golgotha will never save thy soul,
The cross in thine own heart alone can make thee whole.

Christ rose not from the dead, Christ still is in the grave,
If thou for whom he died art still of sin the slave.

They are only assured believers in Christ, whose conviction rests not merely upon happenings in the past, for which they must depend upon the testimony of others, but upon happenings in themselves, of which they are firsthand witnesses. Whittier has voiced this personal experience of Christ:

In joy of inward peace, or sense
Of sorrow over sin,
He is His own best evidence,
His witness is within.

No fable old, nor mythic lore,
Nor dream of bards and seers,
No dead fact stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years;—

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He;
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

And the late Dr. Maltbie Babcock wrote:

I envy not the Twelve, nearer to me is He;
The life He once lived here on earth, He lives again in me.

Ascended now to God, my witness there to be,
His witness here am I, because His Spirit dwells in me.

To these men, as to Paul, Christ is the life within themselves.

In the second place, the stress which Paul's portrait places on Christ as the link attaching the Christian to all power in God. Sometimes he speaks of Christians as not only crucified and risen with Christ, but also as already ascended with Him in the heavenly regions, comrades now

of God's life and sharers of His might. At other times Paul places Christ at God's right hand in the supreme place of power, and pictures Christians as joined to Him and one with Him as a body is one with the head. Both pictures present Christ connecting His followers with God Himself and supplying them with His incalculable resources. When one surveys the career of Paul—the sheer drive of the man as he goes from city to city, through scourgings and stonings and imprisonments and shipwrecks, thinking out profoundest questions, hunting up a runaway slave, establishing churches, preaching, teaching, writing letters, carrying everybody's burdens—these pictures stand for an indisputable fact in his experience. Paul spoke from this experience when he said that to have Christ dwelling in the heart by faith is to be "filled unto all the fulness of God."

Certain engineers have proposed to impound the waters which sweep in with the tide in the Bay of Fundy, and to furnish power to all the New England states. What a vision of the energy of the vast Atlantic brought to towns to run the machinery of factories and to operate transit systems, and carried to countless homes and remote cottages to supply them with light and heat. Think of the might of an ocean-tide sweeping up to an isolated farmhouse on an inland hillside to warm and brighten it!

Paul's portrait of Jesus kindles the imagination as he represents the outflow of God's fulness in Christ, bringing the vasty deeps of the spiritual universe to a Christian's heart to reinforce him against temptation, to break habits, to master fears, to uproot selfishness, and to empower him to subdue a whole world to love. With such a spiritual connection prospects of boundless development unfold: "Christ in you the hope of glory." With such a connection a Christian feels himself adequate for any strain or any undertaking: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me;" "I labor, striving according to His

working, which worketh in me mightily." Where will you find a sublimer assurance of possessing an alliance with all the mighty forces of existence than this: "All things are yours: whether the world or life or death, or things present or things to come: all are yours; and ye are Christ's [there is the connecting link] for Christ is God's."

Are we "in Christ," committed to Him, and through Him made at one with God?

CHAPTER III

THE PORTRAIT IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Readers of Mark Twain's *Autobiography* may recall how one day he read in the morning newspaper a vivid account of a debate in Congress over an incident which had occurred in the White House under Mr. Roosevelt's administration, and inserted the entire narrative in the *Autobiography* as an illustration of his ideal of style that would live.

> When an eye-witness sets down in narrative form some extraordinary occurrence which he has witnessed, that is *news*—that is the news form, and its interest is absolutely indestructible; time can have no deteriorating effect upon that episode. If any stray copy of this book shall, by any chance, escape the paper-mill for a century or so, and then be discovered and read, I am betting that that remote reader will find that this account is still *news* and that it is just as interesting as any news he will find in the newspaper of his day and morning—if newspapers shall still be in existence then.

The four biographies with which our New Testament opens are called gospels, which means "good news," and the earliest of them to be written, that of St. Mark, is penned in just that graphic style of the report which so keen a judge of language as Mark Twain declared "able to carry along with it for ages and ages the very same interest" which it had for its first readers.

In the earliest preaching we have seen Jesus pictured as exalted at God's right hand in the heavens, and in Paul's letters we have seen Him portrayed also as a life-giving Spirit in the hearts of His followers. The Jesus of Galilee and of Jerusalem seems almost blotted out by this glorified spiritual Being. But the Man who had taught and healed and suffered had left too vital a memory to be effaced.

Scholars seem fairly agreed that none of our gospels in their present forms is from the pen of an eye-witness; but there is an early and apparently trustworthy tradition that John Mark recorded the reminiscences of Peter, and his narrative has touches which would seem to bear this out. It begins and ends with special mention of this apostle. It sets on its first page the call of Peter and his brother, Jesus' going to their house and curing Simon's wife's mother, and the statement that Jesus' retirement for prayer was interrupted by "Simon and they that were with him." On its last page is the message of the angel in the empty tomb; "Go, tell His disciples *and Peter.*" Mark's home was in Jerusalem, where his mother's house was a resort of the early Christians. He may himself have been an eye-witness of some of the closing events in Jesus' life, and many think he placed himself in the dim background of the portrait in the nameless young man who was nearly arrested in the garden and ran away leaving his clothes in the hands of his would-be captors. In that home there would be much talk of what Jesus had said and done. Mark had been a missionary helper of Barnabas and Paul, as well as of Peter; and out of this experience he compiled his gospel for non-Jewish readers, translating Aramaic words and explaining Palestinian customs. Whoever his first readers were, he appears to be connecting them with the events he records when he mentions that Simon of Cyrene, who carried Christ's cross, was "the father of Alexander and Rufus," implying that Alexander and

Rufus were known to them. It is a portrait of Jesus drawn somewhere about 70 A. D. to aid the missionary cause.

Mark writes in a simple, colloquial style, and with an artistic skill which makes his readers feel themselves on the scene and watching what he describes. A favorite introduction is "and Jesus began to." "He began to teach by the sea side"; "He called unto Him the twelve and began to send them forth"; in Gethsemane "He began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled." It is a phrase which piques curiosity to look for what may follow. He reports what is said in direct quotations so that we think ourselves listening to the speakers. "Jesus said unto the sea, Peace be still"; to the demoniac "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man"; to the disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." Matthew and Luke, with Mark's vivid narrative in their hands, condense it to "He *rebuked* the winds and the sea." Not only does Mark make us hear the actual conversation, but he often preserves the Aramaic words which Jesus used, although his first readers, like ourselves, had to have them translated. It is Mark who tells us that Jesus said to Jairus' daughter: "Talitha cumi, Damsel, arise"; to the deaf and dumb man "Ephphatha, Be opened"; that He named James and John "Boanerges, sons of thunder," and quoted the word "Korban, dedicated" which men used of their gifts; and it is Mark, whom Matthew copies, to whom we owe the syllables overheard from Jesus' dying lips: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." Mark is fond of recording occurrences in the present tense as though they were just happening: "There cometh to Him a leper"; "They come, bringing unto Him a man sick of the palsy"; "He goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto Him." Mark tries to make us see Jesus' gestures and movements: in the synagogue "He looked round about on them with anger"; He "turned Him about in the press" to see who

had touched Him; He "looked up to heaven" when He gave thanks with the loaves and fishes; He took little children "up in His arms and laid His hands upon them"; when the young ruler ran to Him, Jesus "beholding him, loved him"; in the temple He "looked round about upon all things."

Mark inserts details which the other evangelists consider irrelevant. He reports that the swine "ran violently down a steep place into the sea"; that the disciples were sent out "two and two"; that the five thousand sat down "by companies upon the green grass" (what a vivid touch of color!) and that they reclined in groups "by hundreds and by fifties"; that Jesus was "in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on the pillow"; that He "sat down over against the treasury" watching how gifts were brought; that Peter "went out into the porch"; and that at the crucifixion the centurion "stood over against Jesus." Listen to two graphic descriptions of cures. Here is that of the deaf and dumb:

> And He took him aside from the multitude privately, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spat, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

And here is His healing of a blind man:

> He took hold of him by the hand, and brought him out of the village: and when He had spit on his eyes, and laid His hands upon him, He asked him, Seest thou aught? And he looked up and saith, I see men: for I behold them as trees, walking. Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes and he looked steadfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly.

The other evangelists appear to have thought that it detracted from Jesus' power to mention the steps in the process of a cure: but Mark lets us see the personal attention Jesus gave, the pains He took, and the effort which it cost Him to communicate His strength.

Mark's portrait makes Jesus move breathlessly from event to event because he so often uses the adverb "straightway." One can count it forty times. Listen to the first sabbath in Capernaum:

> And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day He entered into the synagogue and taught. And straightway there was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell Him of her.

It is a gospel which ought to be particularly intelligible to hurried city-dwellers. Jesus is often interrupted and constantly under pressure:

> In the morning a great while before day, He rose and went out [to pray]. And Simon and they that were with him followed after Him: and they found Him, and say unto Him, All are seeking Thee.
>
> Again: For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

This impression of hurry is enhanced by piling incident on incident, and linking them, as is common in Hebrew writing, by a simple "and." Run your eye over the gospel in the Revised Version, where the material is divided into paragraphs, and you will notice that almost every section begins with "And." (In the Greek edition of Westcott and Hort, all but eleven of the ninety sections

begin with the Greek word for "and.") Here is a sequence in the last week:

> *And* while He was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman.
>
> *And* Judas Iscariot, he that was one of the twelve, went away unto the chief priests.
>
> *And* on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the passover, His disciples say unto Him.
>
> *And* when it was evening He cometh with the twelve.
>
> *And* as they were eating, He took bread.
>
> *And* when they had sung a hymn they went out.
>
> *And* they come into a place, which was named Gethsemane.

Nor is it only that paragraph is added to paragraph in this way, but in a single scene happening is heaped upon happening. Listen to the opening of the account of what took place in the garden:

> *And* they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane: *and* He saith unto His disciples, Sit ye here, while I pray. *And* He taketh with Him Peter, James, and John, *and* began to be greatly amazed *and* sore troubled. *And* He saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch. *And* He went forward a little, *and* fell on the ground, *and* prayed.

Hebrew has few connectives, and Mark thinks in Hebrew, but both in Greek and in English this monotonous "and" is striking. In tragic passages it sounds like the tolling of a bell.

The outstanding characteristic of Jesus in this portrait is power—power in teaching, in cures, in influence over

men, in death, in resurrection. The evangelist dwells on the effect Jesus produces:

He calls fishermen, "and straightway they left the nets and followed Him."

In the synagogue, "they were astonished at His teaching."

After the cure of the demoniac, "they were all amazed."

Nor does this effect wear off. Repeatedly it occurs in the experience of the disciples:

> They understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask Him.
>
> And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and they that followed were afraid.

It is the final impression which the gospel, as we now have it, leaves with us; for its original ending has been lost, and the present conclusion is a later addition. The last words of Mark's narrative are:

> And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid.

The late Dr. Steinmetz used to take visitors into a laboratory of the General Electric Company in Schenectady, and make terrific bolts of lightning shoot about, while they sat with protecting glasses over their eyes and with stuffed ears, feeling themselves at the center of a tremendous storm. Mark carries us back to Palestine and sets us as onlookers at a Life which in word and act and endurance, and in the love manifest in them all, is an astounding display of the might of God.

Yet this portrait renders Jesus perhaps more human than any of the other New Testament pictures. Mark alone speaks of Jesus as "the carpenter," and tells us that at

Nazareth He could not do mighty works; that He was angry; that He wondered; that He sighed; that He confessed ignorance—"Of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son." Mark stresses the longing of Jesus for solitude when clamant demands were made on His time and strength. And on Mark's pages the last word from Jesus' dying lips is the tragic cry: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Contrast that with Luke's serene: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit"; and John's exultant: "It is finished." Mark's realism does not shrink from putting into the portrait traces of human passion and weakness and ignorance, which later evangelists omitted. His portrait sets us closer than any other to the Man of Nazareth, of Capernaum, of Gethsemane, and of Golgotha.

We today would be more impressed with Jesus' power in such matchless stories as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, which Luke records, than in many of these accounts of miracles; but Mark as a practical missionary knew what appealed to those with whom he worked. He will make them see the actual human Figure moving and working, and feel the power of God.

How then does he account for this astonishing power in Jesus? There is no suggestion that in Him a pre-existent heavenly Spirit has become Man, as Paul pictures Him. There is no hint of a miraculous birth. Jesus is introduced in full manhood, coming up to John's baptism, and there receiving an endowment of the Spirit and hearing a Voice which calls Him God's Son, the Chosen to bring in the kingdom. If you recall the statements ascribed to Peter in the Acts concerning Jesus' career, it would seem that Mark has taken his outline and filled it in:

> Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which

> God did by Him in the midst of you; * * * God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.

Jesus is no less divine to Mark than to Paul, although Mark pictures, as Paul does not, the Man who is Himself dependent on God, who is tempted, who is limited in power and knowledge, who prays, who struggles, who goes down into the depths of God-forsakenness. To Mark, Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, the supreme and final Representative sent to men: "He had yet One, a beloved Son: He sent Him last unto them, saying, They will reverence My Son." This Messiah is recognized by Peter and the disciples. He declares Himself dramatically before the Sanhedrin:

> The high priest asked Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.

The impression which Jesus makes reaches its climax on the cross, when a Roman officer, speaking for the Gentile public for whom Mark is painting this portrait, a man familiar with force and heroic courage, now confronting that which to him surpasses human attainment, confesses: "Truly this Man was a Son of God."

Mark's vivid picture omits much that we prize. It includes far fewer sayings of Jesus than Matthew or Luke, although it preserves one charming parable which they overlook—the seed growing of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. It affords no glimpse of the Child Jesus. It offers no interpretation of Him as the Life and Light of the soul such as John supplies us. But with a swift succession of life-like sketches, it brings Jesus before our eyes, speaking with authority, touching

helpless men with potent hands, lifting little children in His arms, training disciples, challenged by bitter opponents, facing the mystery of death, giving His life a ransom for many, buried, raised from the dead, and "going before" His disciples to be followed and known of them.

What is its special appeal for us?

First, for that large group of persons who feel that if there was anything unusual in Jesus' origin, He is of no value to them as an example, here is a portrait which presents a Man endowed with power in response to His own obedience and trust. There are various casts of mind in the Church of our time, as there were in the Church at the beginning. We do well to remind ourselves that the New Testament contains a variety of interpretations of its Lord. Mark's picture appeals to those who are unsympathetic with a narrative which starts with a miraculous birth or with the incarnation of a pre-existing Being. There is always a danger that such minds may think Jesus impossible for them because they cannot surmount this initial difficulty. Let them begin just where this gospel begins, with the Man Jesus, and then go on to discover with Him His surprises of Divine power.

Second, there are temperaments to whom the mystical Christ of Paul and of John, the Christ within the soul, is unintelligible. They are practically minded folk who look out and not in, and the portrait of a Christ alive at the center of their beings seems to them fanciful. Let Mark tell them what discipleship meant to the original twelve. Jesus appointed them "that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to cast out demons." There is a threefold description of the Christian life; to be "with Jesus"—and Mark's realistic portrait is well fitted to keep Jesus livingly before us; to be sent forth on Christ's business to Christianize every sphere of human life—a purpose on which we are all agreed, although many of us are not conspicuously active

in its achievement; and to have power to master the diabolical factors in our world, a power which comes from contact with Jesus infecting us with His faith and hope and love. Paul pictures the mind of Christ by presenting a celestial Being in the form of God who stoops to earth to serve as a Man among men; Mark pictures it by showing the hand of the human Jesus reaching out to touch a contaminating leper. It is the same mind into which we look through both portraits. To be Christians is to possess that mind, whether we think of its becoming ours by a recreating Spirit alive within us, or by our living with this Figure before our eyes and catching the tone and temper and vigor of His life.

Third, the virile and forceful Jesus of this portrait is both a wholesome corrective of the effeminate Christ whom Christian art has set forth, and the aggressive Leader whom the Church of our time needs to recall. There is a widespread feeling that Christianity is barely holding its own. One can see paganism rampant in literature and in life all about us. A pioneer missionary, faced with the crass and cruel heathenism of the imperial Roman world, drew this portrait of an irresistible Jesus, before whom even a hardened official charged with a bloody execution bowed in reverence. Such is the impressive Christ, who once lived and died, and who "goes before" His followers to be known of us and proclaimed in His impressiveness, as St. Mark drew Him.

Finally, there is much talk about Christ, and even some fellowship with Him, which is lacking in awe. Men both outside and inside the Christian Church speak of Him with unbated breath, as an interesting item in the world's conglomerate history. In religion we are only helped by that before which we are on our knees in adoration. This portrait, in many ways the most human picture of Jesus, presents One who frightens those who know Him best. They are in the presence of a Man whose power in speech

and act and patience and devotion startles them. They never get over being surprised. "They were amazed straightway with a great amazement." Is it not a true picture of Jesus, verified again and again by those who think enough about Him and live sufficiently by His power to know?

CHAPTER IV

THE PORTRAIT IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

A portrait differs from a snapshot. The instantaneous photograph catches its subject in a single pose, which may or may not be typical; the portrait is the artist's attempt to give the permanent impression of the man.

> As when a painter, poring on a face,
> Divinely through all hindrance finds the man
> Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
> The shape and color of a mind and life,
> Lives for his children, ever at its best
> And fullest.

An artist composes a portrait, putting together details which may never have been found at the same moment in actual life, and omitting others which blur or confuse the dominant impression. Our gospels are not a series of snapshots, but carefully composed pictures, where the order of events or their location in definite places is forgotten in the effort to portray the character of Jesus as the Lord of men.

The skilled artist to whom we owe the first portrait in our present New Testament has drawn his materials from various sources. Nearly the whole narrative of Mark is here, smoothed and often condensed. Into this, as a framework, is fitted a collection of the Sayings of Jesus, which we also find in slightly different form in Luke. There is an early tradition that the Apostle Matthew wrote the Sayings of Jesus in Hebrew, and it is generally thought

that this collection of Jesus' words is here, and so has given to this book the title, "The Gospel *according to* Matthew." Besides this collection, the evangelist had additional sources—another collection of Jesus' teachings —for he has given us eight parables which neither Mark nor Luke record, and the traditions on which he draws for Jesus' birth and His appearance after the resurrection.

In composing his portrait he groups his material, massing a large number of sayings in what we call "the Sermon on the Mount"—sayings which Luke connects with various occasions; bringing together parables or instructions to the disciples which treat similar subjects; and arranging in a series Jesus' mighty works. A good teacher knows the value of numbering his points. This evangelist begins with a genealogy divided into three sections—from Abraham to David, from David to the Captivity, from the Captivity to the birth of the Messiah—and under each section places twice seven generations. Threes and sevens are favorite numbers with him; three comparisons of Jesus as greater than the temple, than Jonah, than Solomon; three parables on the judgment—the virgins, the talents, the sheep and goats; seven clauses in the Lord's prayer, seven parables of the kingdom, seven woes. He seems also to have had an odd liking for two figures on his canvas, where Mark and Luke place only one—two Gadarene demoniacs, two blind men at Jericho, and (strangest of all) two asses in Christ's entry into Jerusalem.

He has some characteristic expressions, notably "the kingdom of heaven," which he uses where the others speak of the kingdom of God. Instead of Mark's breathless narrative, he moves along with introductions such as "and it came to pass," "and behold," "at that season," "now." This helps to render the portrait more quietly devout.

More important are the colors in which he presents the figure of Jesus.

First, in Old Testament colors, the Fulfiller of prophecy. Time and again we hear such expressions as "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet." To us a number of the passages cited seem no predictions at all. For instance, Hosea had spoken of God's kindness to His people in the national infancy: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" This evangelist, caught by the two words "son" and "Egypt," takes it as a prophecy of Joseph's flight with the Child Jesus. These Old Testament quotations are interesting to us not so much as fulfilled predictions, but as the tints in which the evangelist sees Jesus as the Light of a darkened world, ("To them that sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up," 4: 15, 16), the Bearer of humanity's ills, ("That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet Isaiah, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses," 8: 17), the considerate Servant of the Lord, who does not break bruised reeds or put out dimly flickering wicks (12: 18-21). One of the evangelist's quotations we cannot locate: "He shall be called a Nazarene"; another from Zechariah is mistakenly ascribed to Jeremiah. This will pain those who wish an inerrant Bible; but those to whom errors in detail are trifling and inevitable, or who may even feel the evangelist more like ourselves because of this slip of memory, are satisfied with the insight which saw in Jesus, who was so unlike the Messiah of many devout anticipations, the true goal of Israel's hope. The Jews had three chief religious treasures: the Law, the Temple, and the Messiah. This evangelist portrays Jesus as a Law-giver on the mount, whose precepts contain the righteousness of the old Law and better; a greater than the Temple in whose Person God, once sought in the holy of holies, is present—Im-

manuel; and the royal Deliverer who saves His people from their sins.

Second, he pictures Him in Jewish colors, a Patriot but in bitter conflict with His nation. No portrait is so thoroughly Jewish. Jesus insists on the ancestral religion:

> Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished.

He urges respect for the official religious teachers.

> The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe.

He speaks of His own mission as restricted to Jews, and confines His disciples within the same limits:

> I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. * * * Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans.

In no other New Testament writing do we find such extreme nationalism; but in no other do we hear such denunciation of Jewish opposition. Think of the seven times repeated "Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites," and of the laments over Jewish cities: "Woe unto thee Chorazin!" "woe unto thee Bethsaida!" "and thou, Capernaum!" No other is so insistent on Israel's doom: "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." He records the fateful cry before Pilate's judgment-seat, when the Gentile governor washes his hands: "His blood be upon us and our children." And he adds to one of the parables, evidently recalling the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans: "The king was wroth; and he sent

his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city." This is the portrait of Jesus the Jew, but the Doomsman of an unresponsive nation.

Third, he portrays Him as the Saviour of the world. His first chapter depicts Him as the Heir of Abraham and David; his second shows the wise men coming from afar with their gifts. Even in the genealogy there are hints that this royally Jewish blood is not all Jewish, for Rahab the Canaanitess and Ruth the Moabitess are in that line of ancestry. At the center of the gospel, Jesus' highest praise is given to a Roman centurion: "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." Further on, it is a Canaanitish woman who overcomes His resolve to serve Jews only and gains her daughter's cure. Later, a Roman woman, Pilate's wife, intercedes for His life, when His own people are crying to crucify Him. And the gospel closes with the great commission: "Go ye and make disciples of all the nations." This Jewish Messiah is for the whole world. It has been said that the evangelist unconsciously sketched his own portrait in the scribe instructed unto the kingdom who brings out of his treasure "things new and old." He prizes the religion of patriarchs and prophets; he appreciates the novelties of Jesus; and he keeps both. His outlook is reflected in the words:

> I say unto you that many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

The "many" are the new-comers of the evangelist's own day from the non-Jewish world, for he was writing about the last quarter of the First Century, after Paul and others had done their work; but they "sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob"—representatives of the historic faith of Israel.

Fourth, he paints Jesus in ecclesiastical colors as the Founder of the Church. This is the only gospel in which

that word occurs. We do not know whether we hear the evangelist's interpretation or Jesus' own words, which other gospels omit, in the saying to Peter: "Upon this rock I will build My Church." In another passage the evangelist certainly expands Jesus' words in order to counsel his readers. Jesus had said: "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone." But the case must often have come up where the brother refused to listen. What then? The evangelist offers his advice: "Take with thee one or two more"; and if that fails: "Tell it unto the Church." That saying would have had no meaning in Jesus' lifetime when the Church was not yet in existence. The Jesus of this portrait is establishing an institution. In His last command He is made to stress a sacrament: "Go ye and make disciples, *baptizing* them." The nation Israel is doomed; its successor is the Christian Church in which Jew and Gentile together, obeying this Divine King, work and wait for the kingdom of heaven.

This portrait of Jesus pictures Him as truly human, but the evangelist omits from Mark's account all allusion to limitations of Jesus' knowledge or power, and all references to such emotions as anger, or sighing, or wonder. In Mark's picture Jesus asks the young ruler: "Why callest thou Me good?" Our evangelist cannot see how anyone could help calling Jesus good, and alters it to: "Why askest thou Me concerning that which is good?"

He portrays Him as the Son of God, and he carries back Jesus' possession of the Holy Spirit from the baptism to a miraculous birth. Jesus is conceived by the Spirit in Mary's womb. Nothing is said of a pre-existence in heaven; and it is worth noting that no New Testament writer who speaks of the pre-existing heavenly Being refers to a conception by the Spirit in a virgin mother. Apparently these were originally two methods of accounting for the uniqueness of Jesus. The Church later combined

them, when the books which form our New Testament were put together. In all our portraits Jesus is Divine and comes from God—in the earliest preaching He is "made Lord and Christ" at the resurrection, in Mark by the Spirit at the baptism, in Matthew by the Spirit in Mary's womb, in Paul He was "in the form of God" and emptied Himself to become man. Is it not a supreme tribute to Jesus, that He was so marvellous, that many explanations of His Divinity are suggested? In this Gospel according to Matthew there are three:—His descent from Abraham and David, His miraculous birth (not easily combined with the ancestry which is traced through Joseph), and the anointing at the Jordan with the Spirit. How inevitably Jesus raises the question this evangelist reports in the synagogue at Nazareth: "Whence hath this Man all these things?"

What, then, is the present significance of this evangelist's portrait of Jesus?

To begin with it is far and away the most important of all the pictures of Christ, both because it tells us more about Him than we find in any other single book, and because, standing first in the New Testament, it is the gospel which is oftenest read by the vast majority of Christians. When anyone wants to know what Jesus taught and did, he opens his Bible and naturally starts with Matthew. It is this gospel's version of the Lord's Prayer which is everywhere memorized and used in churches, this arrangement of the Beatitudes which is learned by heart, this statement of the Great Commission which is taken as "the marching orders" of the Church. If one were asked to name the most influential book ever written, he ought to reply "The Gospel according to Matthew."

Further, this portrait of Jesus is admirably fitted to stand at the close of the Old Testament and on the threshold of the New. It does not minimize the revolutionary novelty of Jesus: "Ye have heard that it was said, but I

say unto you." At the same time the Law and the Prophets are tenderly cherished, and the religion of Israel is not discarded but conserved and completed. There are still many Christians, usually not well-informed persons, who speak disparagingly of the Old Testament. It would be well for them to sit down and inquire in what respects the God in whom Jesus believed, and the life to which He called men, differ from the God and the devout life of the psalmists and prophets and wise men of Israel. This evangelist is entirely correct when he paints Jesus in Old Testament colors as a loyal Jew, the rightful Heir of Hebrew convictions and ideals. The early Church was right when it kept the Old Testament as its sacred book. It was on these scriptures that Jesus' soul was nourished, in their atmosphere that His mind thought, in its language that He expressed His faith and purpose, and by its guidance that He shaped His own career. We must use His freedom in distinguishing less and more valuable elements in the Hebrew Bible, the temporary and the permanent; but its main convictions about God and man abide as the center of the Christian religion.

Moreover this portrait brings into prominence certain aspects of Jesus which were in danger of being overlooked. We have seen that in the earliest preaching not one of His sayings is quoted and that Paul seldom mentions them. While Mark presents Jesus as a Teacher, he does not report much of His teaching. In this picture Jesus is preeminently a Teacher; the crowds in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday speak of Him as "the Prophet"; and in this gospel are set down more of His teachings than in any other. Indeed if anyone today talks of the teaching of Christ, he is probably thinking of something in the Sermon on the Mount as it stands in this book. Jesus is presented as the authoritative Teacher: "Verily I say unto you" is the familiar introduction to His statements. To list the parables and sayings which we owe to this evangelist only,

supplies us with an impressive record of his vast contribution to the Christian Church. Think of such parables as the hid treasure, the pearl of great price, the laborers in the vineyard, the wise and foolish virgins; of the beatitudes on the meek, on them that hunger and thirst after righteousness, on the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers; of the gracious invitation, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden"; and of the parable of the judgment in which righteous and wicked are separated inasmuch as they did, or did not, unto one of the least of Christ's brethren. Luke alone can be compared with this evangelist, and if our compiler knew such parables as that of the Good Samaritan and of the Prodigal Son we can hardly understand how he omitted them. But equally difficult is it to understand how Luke left out "Come unto Me all ye that labor," the beatitudes on the pure in heart and the peacemakers; and that matchless summary: "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." We must never forget that Jesus spent the brief years of His public work teaching, and that a primary duty of everyone who would follow Him is laid down in the saying found only in this gospel: "Learn of Me." We must measure our loyalty to Jesus by the extent to which we keep being educated by Him.

Again, how essential is this portrait of Jesus the Fulfiller. Missionaries to a non-Christian folk go not to uproot existing faith and principles, but to supply deficiencies. Christ comes to each one of us not to unmake our natural selves with all the wealth of our individuality, but to make full what is partial and fragmentary. Bruised reeds are not to be snapped and thrown aside nor a sputtering lamp put out. Paul and John lay the stress on "new creatures," "born again," and it is glorious to recall

that Christ can make over the worst and give fresh starts to those whose lives are wrecks. But this evangelist is right in stressing Christ the Conserver who rounds out the defective. Paul made over is still Paul, and how much poorer the Church and the world would be, if any element in his rich personality had been suppressed! Ours is an unfinished earth and its men and women are germinal selves, "tadpoles of archangels" someone called us, embryonic sons and daughters of the Most High. Many of the woes of the world are due to its uncompleted condition, and most of our personal difficulties are due to the fact that we are mere starts towards children of God, and the starts are often irregular with one part of us developed out of proportion to the rest. Thank God for this Christ who comes not to destroy but to fulfil.

Again, is there not a place for an ecclesiastical Jesus? True, He is opposed by the Jewish Church, and is ahead of His own Church and impeded by it in every age. But is it correct to present Jesus as an individualist without interest in the religious organization? While He drew up no constitution nor creed nor ritual, He succeeded in building about Himself a company of disciples with the rock-like fidelity of Peter. If He had not, what would have remained of His work? In every generation it is the group who identify themselves with Him as outspokenly as Peter, and accept the responsibility for His cause, with whom He Himself abides and through whom He works. This portrait is a perennial reminder, when we become disgusted with existing churches and their leaders, of the true Church within the official Church, and of the necessity of maintaining the organized Church that through it the spiritual Church may live and do its work.

Finally, this portrait of the kingly Jesus, "Son of David" and "Son of the living God," makes obedience the main test of Christian discipleship: "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." The

chief indictment of the leaders of the Jewish Church runs: "They say, and do not." Amiel of Geneva once entered in his private journal:

> The distinguishing mark of religion is not so much liberty as obedience, and its value is measured by the sacrifices which it can extract from the individual.

This evangelist insists on Jesus' authority. The voice from heaven at the Baptism, instead of speaking to Jesus Himself as in Mark, speaks to those present: "*This is* My beloved Son." Then follows the teaching on the mount, a Christian Sinai, where a greater than Moses utters the will of God. What that will means both for Jesus and His followers is made plain in Gethsemane, where we hear the words "Thy will be done," and at Golgotha. And the last message from the Figure in this portrait is a command: "Go ye, make disciples: and lo, I am with you always." To be a Christian "according to Matthew" is to learn of Jesus and obey Him in spreading His kingdom, expecting and bravely sharing His cross, and finding Him an abiding presence.

CHAPTER V

THE PORTRAIT IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

In architecture, in sculpture and in literature, the nation which has made the richest contribution to mankind is Greece, and the most beautiful of the portraits of our Lord in the New Testament is by a Greek physician, Luke. At its outset is the story of the Birth in a manger announced by angels to shepherds; at its close the Walk to Emmaus with Cleopas and another whose hearts burn within them; at its center are the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son—the sublimest pictures Jesus ever sketched.

The artist tells us that he composed his portrait out of materials found in "many" sources. We can recognize two of them—Mark, three-fourths of whose gospel is here, and the Collection of Jesus' Sayings usually ascribed to the Apostle Matthew. Besides these Luke had a priceless narrative of Sayings and Doings, with an account of the Death and Resurrection, and still another writing from which he translates his version of the childhood of both John the Baptist and Jesus. He is a skilful writer, translating prose and poetry with charm, and rendering dramatic scenes with moving power.

He has some peculiarities. He materializes: the Spirit at the Baptism descends "in a bodily form as a dove" and the risen Jesus speaks of His "flesh and bones." He adds explanations: at the Transfiguration he tells us that the topic of Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah was

His "exodus" to be accomplished at the capital, and he says that Jesus spoke the Parable of the Pounds "because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear." He idealizes the apostles, excusing the three who slept in Gethsemane as sleeping "for sorrow," and omitting or toning down Jesus' rebukes. He leaves out the remark to Peter: "Get thee behind Me, Satan." In the storm, according to Mark, He asked the disciples "Have ye not yet faith?" Luke makes Him say, "Where is your faith?" He is fond of setting on his canvas contrasting characters—the Pharisee and the Publican, Dives and Lazarus, the Prodigal and the Elder Brother, in Jesus' parables, and Mary and Martha, the penitent and impenitent robbers, in his own descriptions.

Luke tells us that he drew this portrait for an influential Gentile, Theophilus, so we are not surprised that he leaves out Aramaic words or gives their Greek equivalents —"lawyer" for "scribe," "master" for "Rabbi," "The Skull" (Calvary) for Golgotha, Simon the zealot instead of Simon the Cananean. Much of the Old Testament background with its references to "them of old time," so prominent in the first gospel, disappears. Disputes about things clean and unclean are omitted, and the harsh denunciations of the leaders of the Jewish Church are curtailed and given a different setting. Jesus talks with Pharisees at their own dinner-tables, where He is their Guest, and tactfully turns the conversation to expose their faults. The brusque Hebrew prophet becomes an urbane Greek. Luke dwells on Jesus' tenderness—His tears over Jerusalem and His prayer for those who put Him to death.

He sets Jesus' Figure before us as *the Saviour of sinners.* The angel announces: "There is born to you a Saviour." In Luke only have we the story of Zacchaeus with the saying: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." In Matthew there is the Parable of the

Lost Sheep, but Luke adds to it The Lost Coin and the Lost Son in the far country. Other evangelists picture Jesus anointed by a devoted woman, but Luke tells of "a woman who was in the city a sinner," who bathed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. He alone records the prayer of the publican: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and the plea of the dying thief: "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom," with the heartening reply: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." A favorite word of Luke's great companion, the apostle Paul, is "grace"—a word which meant originally charm, and never wholly lost that sense when it took on the deeper meaning of God's favor to the unlovely. Luke uses it eight times. He makes Jesus ask it in His disciples: "If ye do good to them that do good to you, what grace have ye?" and while Mark and Matthew stress the authority with which Jesus spoke, in Luke His hearers also "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." In Matthew Jesus bids us "Be perfect, as the Father in heaven is perfect"; in Luke we hear Him say: "Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful." This portrait sets forth Jesus as like the Father "kind to the unthankful and the evil."

Again, Luke presents Jesus as interested in *Samaritans* —the peculiarly disliked neighbors of the Jews. He omits the instruction to the disciples: "Enter not into any city of the Samaritans." He alone tells us that Jesus rebuked two of them for wishing to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village—the more striking because he tries to place the apostles in the best possible light and minimize Jesus' disagreements with them. He alone records the cleansing of ten lepers of whom the only grateful one was a Samaritan. He alone gives us the supreme parable of neighborliness, whose hero is a member of this despised folk. And in the Acts he makes Jesus say in His Great

Commission, "Ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea *and Samaria.*"

Again he paints Jesus as the *Friend of the poor.* The first gospel presents a kingly Child, the Heir of David, to whom gifts are brought by Wise Men from afar. In Luke we have the Babe in a manger, shut out of the inn, and visited only by shepherds. In Jesus' opening sermon Luke puts on His lips the quotation "to preach good tidings to the poor." In Matthew a beatitude is pronounced on "the poor in spirit;" but Luke hears Jesus say: "Blessed are ye poor; Woe unto you that are rich!" He alone reports Jesus' counsel to those who entertain not to invite "rich neighbors," but "the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." In Matthew's version of the Parable of the Great Supper, the servants are told to go to the highways and "bid as many as ye shall find to the marriage feast"; in Luke's version, the servant is told to "bring in the poor and maimed and lame." He alone reports the story of the rich man and Lazarus, where Lazarus is apparently taken to heaven merely because on earth he was a beggar; and the story of the rich fool, whose soul was required of him and his possessions perforce left to others. If Theophilus was wealthy, Luke may have wished to warn him of his perils, and this physician has a peculiar tenderness for the victims of poverty, and makes Jesus use His harshest epithets for the unfeeling rich.

Again, Luke surrounds the Figure of Jesus with figures of *women*—another inferior group in that age. On his first pages are Mary and Elizabeth and Anna. He alone gives us the scene in the home of Mary and Martha, the raising of the son of the widow of Nain with its exquisite touch, "He gave him to his mother," the healing of the woman bound eighteen years, and the ministry of Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Herod's steward, Susanna and other women, who supplied Jesus' wants. Amid uncomplimentary references to wealth, these women

are praised for using theirs well. In the account of the procession to Calvary, he inserts the incident of the women who followed Jesus and His saying: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children." There is one woman we are surprised not to find on his canvas—the Syro-Phoenician mother who prevailed on Jesus to make an exception of His rule to help only Jews. One would think that Luke would have delighted in this instance of going outside the bounds of Israel; but he probably shrank from telling Jesus' apparent reluctance to help her, and from reporting His word about not giving the children's bread to "dogs." This Christian physician paints Jesus as particularly concerned with those upon whom others looked down—Samaritans, the poor, the subordinated sex.

Again, this portrait depicts Him as a *Man of prayer*. In addition to the instances which he finds in Mark's narrative, he shows us Jesus praying at the Baptism, praying at the Transfiguration, praying for His murderers on the cross. Before He selects His apostles He is pictured as spending a whole night in prayer. And it is when Jesus is praying, apparently praying with manifest result, that His disciples ask "Lord, teach us to pray." Luke introduces one of Jesus' parables as spoken "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." He alone gives us the stories of the friend at midnight and the judge importuned by the widow as examples of the value of persistency, and the story of the Pharisee and Publican as an illustration of wrong and right attitudes in prayer. In no other gospel is so much said of Jesus' dependence on the Father. And instead of the tragic cry of "Forsaken!" with which Mark and Matthew picture Him dying, Luke records the trustful assurance: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Again, this portrait presents Him as the *universal Christ*. Simeon's thanksgiving over the Babe in the temple

hails Him as "a Light to lighten the Gentiles." The quotation from the prophet with which the work of John the Baptist is introduced ends: "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." In the sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus is made to refer to the instances where Elijah goes to the home of a widow in Sidon and Elisha cures Naaman the Syrian. What a contrast this sermon in Luke is to the saying Matthew records: "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel!" Painting the portrait for non-Jews Luke gives dates they would recognize: Quirinius is governor in the reign of Augustus Caesar when Jesus is born, and Tiberius Caesar and various subordinate rulers are in authority when the ministry begins. Luke carries back the genealogy beyond Abraham to Adam. He wishes men to see in Jesus, not only the Heir of Israel's patriarchs and kings, but the representative Man, the Redeemer for a whole world.

Luke's is a happy portrait. It commences with hymns over Jesus' birth. The angel brings "good tidings of great joy" to all the people. Jesus announces a program of emancipation and health—"the acceptable year of the Lord." His disciples return from their mission with joy. He sees "Satan fallen as lightning," and "He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit." He speaks to His followers with encouraging confidence: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The gospel closes: "And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, blessing God." With all His tenderness and tears, the Jesus of Luke's picture is a jubilant Figure.

The portrait lacks some of the human touches which Mark has preserved. Luke explains Jesus' failure to work wonders in Nazareth, not by saying that He could not, but that He thought it unwise to try in His own country. He omits an uncomplimentary remark, such as "He is beside Himself," and does not mention the successive steps

in a cure which bring out the pains and efforts it cost Jesus. Instead of the struggle in Gethsemane with its three prayers, we have a single prayer, and the account is so much less tragic that a later hand has inserted in most manuscripts the verse recording an agony and bloody sweat. But Luke alone speaks of Jesus' growth as a normal Child, and dwells on His repeated recourse to God. His mighty works are not His own: "The power of the Lord was with Him to heal." No other gospel makes so much of Jesus' sociability, eating and drinking both with foes and friends. Luke's is a thoroughly human portrait.

And Luke presents Him as Divine. The Babe born to Mary is "Christ the Lord." And there are three hints of the source of His Divine nature. At the Baptism the Spirit rests upon Him, and a Voice from heaven tells Him: "Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee." That is the text of the best manuscripts, and that is probably the explanation of Jesus' Divinity in one of the earlier gospels which Luke was weaving into his narrative. Then in the genealogy stands the mysterious allusion to "Adam, the son of God," as though humanity were the Child of the Father, and Jesus is Divine because He is fully man. Then the account of His birth speaks of Mary as overshadowed by the power of the Most High so that her Son is holy. The wonder of Jesus beggars the ingenuity of those who portray Him to explain Him. There is no suggestion here of a pre-existence in heaven and a coming to earth, but by His ancestry, by His birth, by His baptism, Jesus is the Son of God.

How incalculably poorer we should be without this winsome portrait! We called the Gospel according to Matthew the most important book ever written because it tells us most about Jesus and is oftenest read, but the dozen and more parables given in Luke alone, and some of these the most moving Jesus ever spoke, the story of the Babe of Bethlehem and the Boy in the temple, several

incidents in Jesus' life and passion and resurrection appearances, bring this book a close second, and with many it is the preferred portrait of our Lord. The poet Cowper tells us in one of his letters:

> I have been intimate with a man of fine taste who has confessed to me that, though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, yet he never could read St. Luke's account of our Saviour's appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus without being wonderfully affected by it; and he thought that if the stamp of divinity was anywhere to be found in Scripture, it was strongly marked and visibly impressed upon that passage.

Many of us would say that Jesus was never more irresistible than in such stories as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Luke has caught and portrayed superlatively His fascination.

> For Oh! the Master is so fair,
> His smile so sweet to banished men,
> That they who meet Him unaware
> Can never turn to earth again.

And this is the portrait which lays hold of "banished men." Not many years ago there appeared a little book from the pen of one of our most experienced and devoted workers in Japan. It told of a desperate character, a condemned murderer, in a prison, who was visited by two women missionaries, who found him unresponsive but left with him a copy of the New Testament. One day, bored with nothing to do, he opened it, evidently at Luke's gospel, and what happened he told in a series of letters which were found after his execution. He had begun with the Parable of the Lost Sheep—perhaps the good women had put a marker there at the Fifteenth Chapter —and it caught him.

> Still, [he writes] I was not sufficiently impressed to have any special belief in what I was reading. I simply thought they were words which any preacher might have used. I put the New Testament on the shelf again and did not read it for some time. A little later, when I was tired of doing nothing, I took down the book again and began to read. This time I saw how Jesus was handed over to Pilate, was tried unjustly, and put to death by crucifixion. As I read this I began to think. This person they called Jesus was evidently a man who at any rate tried to lead others into the paths of virtue, and it seemed an inhuman thing to crucify Him, simply because He had different religious opinions from others. Even I, hardened criminal that I was, thought it a shame that His enemies should have treated Him in this way.
>
> I went on, and my attention was next taken by these words: "And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I stopped. I was stabbed to the heart as if pierced by a five-inch nail. What did the verse reveal to me? Shall I call it the love of the heart of Christ? Shall I call it His compassion? I do not know what to call it. I only know that with an unspeakably grateful heart, I believed. Through this simple sentence I was led into the whole of Christianity.

Can any of us, with our years of Christian training, do much better than this Japanese murderer in his solitary cell—can we find a better phrase for the disclosure afforded by this portrait? "The love of the heart of Christ;" "His compassion"—that is His feeling *with* others, His sympathy.

Our world is always full of lost folk—entangled like Zacchaeus in a maze of circumstances, economic, political,

ecclesiastical, social. They are lost, as Luke and Luke's Lord knew when He used three stories to describe them—lost to guidance like a strayed sheep; lost to usefulness, like a coin in the dark and dust under a piece of furniture; lost to loving companionship, like a boy in a far country. The Son of man is come to seek and to save us from aimless wandering, to put us into circulation, to bring us to a Father's heart and home. This is *the gospel*—the quintessence of the message of the life and cross of Jesus.

A man of letters a century ago, the German Jew, Börne, lover of liberty and lover of men, who became a Christian because he believed Jesus stood for freedom and humanity, called Christianity "the religion of all poor devils." Luke would agree with him. Samaritans, beggars like Lazarus, publicans, a bandit being hung, a woman of the streets, yes, and Pharisees met in friendly talk at dinner-tables—these are the folk with whom he surrounds his figure of Jesus. "Poor devils"—Do you and I picture Jesus charmingly to such? "Poor devils"—There are times when we feel and know ourselves just that. Do we also know Luke's Saviour of sinners?

CHAPTER VI

PORTRAIT IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

In the Letter to the Hebrews the portrait of Jesus is placed against a background foreign to our current thought, and we must try to understand it. To this writer there are two worlds—the present world and "the world to come." The latter is not a future world, for it already exists. It is the eternal world, and our world is its temporary copy. He would answer affirmatively the question put by Milton's angel:

> What if on earth
> Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
> Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?

That which interests him in this passing shadow world are the objects of the Jewish religion—the law, the tabernacle, the priesthood, the sacrifices. These are earthly symbols of permanent heavenly realities. The tabernacle was built according to a "pattern" shown to Moses on Mt. Sinai; and this pattern was the divine original. He divides objects into "the copies" and "the heavenly things themselves." For him religion consists in getting beyond these shadowy symbols into the world of God's realities. He is painting a picture of Jesus for Jewish converts who are in danger of lapsing into their old religion because its symbolism fascinates them. He, too, feels the charm of the symbols; but Christianity is for him the final and satisfying faith because in Jesus the heavenly and eternal has come to earth, and those who follow Jesus here and now

enjoy the solid and lasting fellowship with the living God of which the symbols were imperfect hints and foretastes.

> Ye [he says to Christians] are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel.

You recall Shelley's lament for Keats, whom he pictures awaking from the "dream of life,"

> Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
> Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
> Until Death tramples it in fragments.—Die,
> If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek.

Our writer would say: "Live with Jesus, if thou wouldst find the ideals thou desirest thy present possessions."

Against this background of the real and the copy worlds, he portrays Jesus:

First, as the eternal Son of God, belonging to and native in the heavenly world. He is the outraying of God's glory and the impress of His essence. Our writer contrasts Him with angels, dwellers in God's presence. Jewish theology thought of them as brought into being by a word whenever God had a mission for them and then ceasing to be when their function was done. There is a saying that no choir of angels ever sings God's praises twice. They have an exalted but a momentary existence, while Jesus from of old has been God's agent in creating the world and will share His throne forever. Then he contrasts this eternal Son with all the mightiest figures in

Jewish history—with Moses, who led Israel to covenant with God, with Aaron and his priestly line who kept that covenant open, with Joshua who brought them into a promised land, with the prophets who interpreted God's will for their time—and shows how Jesus does fully what all these achieved in fragmentary and fleeting forms.

Second, he portrays Him as a Man, made and tempted like ourselves, whom God appoints a unique High Priest to offer Himself a sacrifice for sins, and pass into the heavens our Forerunner and our continual Intercessor. The ancient sacrifices were faint foreshadowings of Christ's Self-sacrifice on the cross; they helped somewhat those who used them, but Christ brings His followers into perfect intimacy with the Father.

How remote from our thoughts and interests the background and imagery of this portrait are! Has it any value for us? Yes, we shall find it most congenial to our minds and close to our hearts, if we get past its symbolism—a symbolism exactly suited to its first readers—to the insights of this unknown spiritual genius into Jesus' life.

To begin with, none of the evangelists paints more vividly *the growing human experience* of Jesus. Like Paul, this writer pictures Him as eternally existent, but however he may have conceived the mode of His birth (and of that he says nothing), he insists that Jesus began His earthly career with no difference from ourselves. He was "made in all things like unto His brethren." Furthermore He has from eternity been our Brother, for He and we are of one Father, and "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." He does not become our Brother, at His birth in our earth, we have always been His brethren. And because we have a "flesh and blood" existence with death to undergo, He shared our human life and death. Like us He struggled and grew. He suffered in His trials. He was "tempted in all points like as we are." He made His way through this baffling world, as we must, by faith.

Life was an exploration and a battle for Him. No evangelist in His description of Gethsemane paints the agony of Jesus in accepting the cross with more realism:

> Who, in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear.

He selects verbs to convey to us that Jesus was keenly alive to, or as we say, savored the experiences through which He passed: "He *endured* the gainsaying of sinners"; "He *endured* the cross"; "He *tasted* death." And for Jesus, as for all of us, this was an education: "He learned obedience by the things which He experienced"—the Greek word covers life's sweet as well as its bitter. Our author speaks of Jesus as "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows" and also of His strong crying and tears. Both were parts of His education. Jesus did not start at Bethlehem fully equipped as the Saviour of men. It was in the school of experience that He acquired qualifications: "having been made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation."

No gospel gives us the picture of the years in which Jesus developed from Child to Youth, and from Youth to Man. Luke supplies us with a single glimpse of the Boy at twelve, growing in mind and body. But how we wish we had an account of the unfolding of His soul at Nazareth! When He comes before us on the pages of the evangelists He is mature, and there appears no development in character from the Jordan to Calvary. The picturesque summary of three temptations, given in Matthew and Luke, seems a piece of autobiography, which Jesus cast into parables for His disciples; and He does this after the struggles are over, so that we do not watch Him passing through them, and cannot note their effect on Him. We might gain the impression that Jesus was completely fitted

from birth for His task; that He was cast rather than grew. This penetrating writer peers behind the record of His life and makes us see the struggles through which He goes, and how they disciplined Him for leadership in redemption. In bringing His many sons to glory God makes the Captain of their salvation "perfect through experiences." "He tasted"; "He learned."

And Jesus' chief acquisition, according to this portrait, was *sympathy*. To be a priest one must be able to "bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." "I have often observed," writes Mark Rutherford, "that the greatest help we get in time of trouble comes to us from some friend who says quite simply, 'I have endured all that.' " This is precisely what our author says of Jesus: "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." He is "touched with a feeling of our infirmities." The Old Testament at its tenderest speaks of God's understanding His children: "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." "In all their affliction He was afflicted." But according to this writer there is now in heaven at God's right hand a yet more complete sympathy in One who has Himself undergone the whole range of human experience. This understanding and compassionate Jesus is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." He pictures Him "ever living to make intercession for us."

This last is an idea which may repel us until we think it through. If our Father is love, why should we want anyone, even Jesus, interceding for us? Well, when we pray for one another we do not fancy that we remind a forgetful God or tease an unwilling Father to grant a special favor. Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but becoming the partners of His helpfulness. So Jesus, with His intimate knowledge of human need, shares forever the Father's love and care for His children. In classical myth-

ology you recall the story of Theseus, who had to go down through a dark labyrinth, sword in hand, to do battle with a horrible monster, a man-eating creature with the head of a bull and a human body; and how his sister, Ariadne, tied a silken thread about his ankle, and told him that whenever he felt a pull on that thread he might know that she was thinking of him. And Theseus went through that terrifying combat, upheld by constant reminders that Ariadne was with him in thought and heart. So in this portrait, Jesus, within the veil with God, feels with and thinks of His brothers battling with life-devouring temptations. "He is able to save unto the uttermost, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession." By His sympathy He remembers and helps us.

And this brings us to a third aspect of this portrait—Jesus is a Man of *faith*. We are supplied with a definition of faith—"the giving substance to things hoped for, the testing of things not seen." A long roster of successful believers follows, whose creative trust gave substance to airy hopes and brought them into being. And at the climax of the list is Jesus with the significant title, "the Pioneer and Perfecter of faith." He is the boldest Venturer who has gone farthest in trust, and has opened up a new and completely satisfactory life with God for His brethren to settle in.

To this day large numbers of Christians never think of Jesus as One who lived by faith. They say, "He was God, therefore He knew everything present and future." But this inspired artist does not so paint Him. How could he when he tells us that Jesus "learned"? "Made in all things like us," He did not know the unseen. He hoped; and heroically He gave substance to His hopes. He lived and died as though the God of His hope were actually alive and the world of His hope about to come true. And His trust was not misplaced. It seemed so when He was enduring the cross and tasting death; but

"the God of peace" brought Him "again from the dead." And our artist, looking about him a half century or so after Easter, saw and portrayed Him surrounded by little companies of grateful folk who owed their lives to Him and followed His leading. God had "heard" the strong crying and tears; God "brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep."

And Jesus' faith is portrayed not only as faith in God, but also as faith with God in His human followers. The picture of the enthroned Christ, which our artist inherited from the earliest preaching at Pentecost, is given in his skilful hands an added touch. "Jesus, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God, *from henceforth expecting* until His enemies be made the footstool of His feet." John portrays Jesus as trusting Peter to feed His lambs and tend His sheep; in this portrait He is seated confidently awaiting the completion of His work. Henry Drummond said that, next to its love for the chief of sinners, the most touching thing about the religion of Christ is its amazing trust in the least of saints. This picture was drawn for a company of such uncertain Christians that they were on the verge of deserting their Lord. But our artist sketches Him as serenely assured—"from henceforth expecting." Is not Christ's confidence in us a rallying appeal?

In one of the hardest fought combats on the mountainous northern frontier of India a regiment of Scottish highlanders, the Gordons, was detailed to charge up a precipitous height and capture the enemy's trenches. Their commanding officer, as he gave the order to advance, called out, "The Gordons will do it." And they did. Jesus staked everything on that one sacrifice of Himself and on those who ever after would respond to its appeal. He is the Pioneer of creative faith, giving substance to His hope, bringing out of sinning humanity an increasing host fit to dwell in the city whose builder and maker is God.

This portrait has many omissions. Not a single word of Christ's is quoted in the letter from beginning to end, nor is there the slightest reference to Him as a Teacher. We are not told of anything which Jesus did "in the days of His flesh." We are told what was done to Him—"the gainsaying of sinners"—and how He bore it. The resurrection, of which the earliest preachers and St. Paul made so much, is mentioned only once. This writer speaks oftenest of His "passing into the heavens," as our Forerunner. And for him the supreme interest is Jesus' death. He dwells on the ignominy of it: He "suffered without the camp"—an outcast; He "endured the cross, despising shame." His favorite explanation of it is that of a sacrifice for sin in which Jesus is Himself both priest and victim: "He offered Himself."

To many modern readers there is something repugnant in a description which seems to place the death of Jesus in the same class with the bloody butchery of bulls and calves and goats in the Jewish ritual. To them it degrades God to represent Him as requiring the blood of His sinless Son to cleanse His sinful children. But our author stresses the contrast between the killing of helpless animals and the voluntary Self-offering of Jesus. To him the new and decisive element in the cross was Jesus' will—His resolve to carry out the purpose of God even to dying. He places on Jesus' lips the words of a psalmist who had protested against the ritual of slaughtered beasts:

> In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hadst no pleasure:
> Then said I, Lo I am come
> To do Thy will, O God.

Our author adds: "By which will we have been sanctified." It is the will of Christ, the will to die if need be to help His brethren, which wins us. It is true that He insists that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." And is he not stating a fact of history? With-

out blood, without extreme cost, has there been any cleansing of our world's life, any deliverance of man from ignorance or tyranny or exploitation? Nor does this writer picture Jesus as changing God's attitude towards us by His sacrifice: "Christ *through the eternal Spirit* offered Himself." In the Self-offering of Jesus at Calvary he sees disclosed the very nature of God. The love which leads Jesus to suffer and die on men's behalf is the Spirit of the Eternal Himself, the Spirit of that real world of which the holiest things on earth are faint shadows and copies. At Golgotha Jesus is the Son of His Father, "the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance."

Along the south shore of Long Island are a series of bodies of water, some of which are spring-fed fresh ponds although they lie close to the sand dunes beside the beach, but others are bays open to the Atlantic, whose salt waters ebb and flow in unison with the tides of the great ocean. Thus Jesus, pouring out His life in blood, is one in Spirit with the God of all, and through His torn flesh our author sees a way opened into the world of Reality, a way through which God comes to us and we draw near to Him. Discard the metaphor, if it does not help you. Is it not a fact that in the cross we see the most moving picture of God and of the ideal life, and is it not also a fact that by that cross our consciences are laid hold on and changed and brought into accord with God?

And there is another dramatic picture of the crucified Christ on this canvas. Twice our writer portrays Christ suffering again at the hands of Christians who prove disloyal to Him and forsake Him. "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." They have "trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, a common thing."

Some will recall in Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean*

the dream of Julian the Apostate, in which he fancied himself carried to another planet from which he could look down on our earth, where he had destroyed the Christian faith and uprooted the memory of Jesus so that it was "Galileanless."

> But behold there came a procession by me on the strange earth where I stood. There were soldiers and judges and executioners at the head of it and weeping women followed. And lo! in the midst of the slow-moving array was the Galilean alive and bearing a cross on His back. Then I called to Him, and said, "Whither away, Galilean?" And He turned His face to me and smiled, nodded slowly and said, "To the place of the skull."

Had not the author of this Epistle to the Hebrews a true insight when He portrayed Jesus crucified, not only outside the gate of ancient Jerusalem, but also wherever Christians are false to His Spirit? During the War a British sergeant wrote home that he could not help thinking of Jesus as standing between the lines of trenches out in No Man's Land, and the shells of the contestants tearing through His body and the jabs of bayonets thrust through His quivering flesh. Man's slaughter of his fellow-men is a new agony for the Spirit of God. And what of such Calvaries at this moment—where groups are arrayed in economic strife and a vast innocent public suffers, or where the Spirit of Jesus is openly derided as idealistic poppycock in practical affairs, or where the members of one race look down on the members of another as lower creatures, or where Christian folk assume that a few ardent souls will do the sacrificial work of the Church and they can spare themselves from giving that pinches or from toil that costs blood, or where a principle akin to that eternal Spirit revealed at Golgotha is at stake and we who bear Christ's name are too timid or too dull of con-

science to go forth to Him outside the camp of the conventional "bearing His reproach"?

Is there any portrait more moving and heart-searching than this of the sympathetic and understanding Jesus, the same today as in the yesterday when He was tempted and tasted death, His feelings touched by His brethren—expecting, and therefore anointed anew with gladness when we are faithful—expecting, and therefore crucified afresh by our disloyalty?

CHAPTER VII

THE PORTRAIT IN THE REVELATION OF JOHN

The Revelation of John presents us with the most uncongenial portrait of Jesus in the New Testament. His figure is so shrouded in imagery, and imagery which at times impresses us as fantastic and incongruous, that we scarcely recognize the Jesus whom we love on the pages of the Gospels.

To appreciate this picture we must remember the state of mind of these for whom it was first drawn. They were living in a bitterly trying time:

(1) To the seer on Patmos the churches seemed in a parlous condition. In some an earlier enthusiasm and consecration had cooled into lukewarmness. In others there were scandalous and glaring sins. False teachers were sowing corrupting views. All the churches were imperilled by persecution.

(2) The Roman Empire was strangling religion with its cult of patriotism, which deified the State in the person of the reigning Caesar, and demanded that all its people should pay him divine honors. The Emperor claimed the title of *Dominus et Deus*. Christians were already suffering martyrdom for their refusal to accord it.

(3) And back of the decay of the churches and the attacks of the government, the Christians saw a hostile world of spirits, Satan and his angels, terrible and hideous creatures, of whom the Roman imperialism was one embodiment—the beast with seven heads and ten horns. Behind the tragedy about them in the earth, a drama was

developing in the unseen world, where God and His Christ battled "against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places," as Paul had called them.

To hearten his discouraged and imperilled fellow-Christians John paints a portrait of Jesus:

First, as a majestic Figure, standing in the midst of seven golden candlesticks which represent these persecuted and wavering churches. Jesus is pictured as the Lamb—a name applied to Him twenty-nine times in this book—for He has redeemed these churches by His blood. He is called "the faithful Witness"—a plea for like loyalty to conscience in His followers even to blood. He is termed "the Firstborn from the dead"—to confirm their hope of sharing His immortality if they prove faithful unto death. He is proclaimed "the Ruler of the kings of the earth," to fortify them in resisting the tyranny of the all-powerful Caesar. He is painted holding in His right hand seven stars—the steadily shining divine ideals for these struggling churches, burning high in God's purpose for them beyond the winds of earth—and also as "walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"—caring for the sputtering lights of the earthly churches. And in the message of one of these churches Jesus is pictured in a posture which has laid hold on Christian thought with moving power:

> Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.

That is a loved human glimpse of Jesus on a canvas where for the most part He is obscured for us behind the symbols with which this seer clothes Him. And it is a heart-searching glimpse, for we usually think of the words as spoken to those who are not yet followers, while John drew this picture of the barred door and the patiently

knocking Jesus for the members of a Christian church. They were called His and thought of themselves as His, but He found Himself shut out of their lives.

Second, Christ is pictured in heaven, in the presence of the throne of God, surrounded by living creatures and elders (ancient dwellers on high) and an innumerable company of the redeemed. He is described in Old Testament metaphors—the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David—and also as the slain Lamb, with seven horns and seven eyes, that is as complete (seven being the number for perfection) in strength and insight. He is opening the book of human destiny, and breaking its seals. John by this imagery is trying to make fearful Christians appreciate that the Lord of history is the loving Saviour who redeemed them. The future is in His keeping. And John makes them listen to triumphant songs from angels, and from every created thing in the earth, and from a countless throng out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue, ascribing glory to God and the Lamb. But as the drama of history is unfolded in a series of visions, this victory which Jesus is to win follows a hard fought fight. He is pictured as a Warrior, seated upon a white horse, with garments sprinkled with blood and followed by heavenly armies.

It is a strange rôle in which to portray Jesus of Nazareth, with a sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth, ruling the nations with a rod of iron and treading the winepress of the fierce wrath of Almighty God. But if military metaphors are used to depict Christ as a conqueror, His weapons are utterly unlike these of other victors. His name is the Word of God; the sword which comes out of His mouth is His teaching, and even in His wrath He is the Lamb, whose nature is self-sacrifice. The militarism is sublimated into reason and love, as in Heber's hymn, "The Son of God goes forth to war."

Third, Christ is portrayed in the final scene of human

history, when God's holy city descends out of heaven and the nations are gathered into it, as the Bridegroom to whom this commonwealth is wedded, as the Temple filling the whole city with reverence, as the Lamp lighting with glorious beauty every part of its life.

In this portrait the human Jesus is almost completely lost. We are reminded of His ancestry from David, of His birth of the Jewish race, of His crucifixion near a city "which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt," and of His resurrection. But for the most part He is identified with God. Like God He is Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. He shares the throne with Him. He is worshipped as God is worshipped. While the whole book is a flaming protest against the attempt of Roman imperialism to accord divine honors to a man, the reigning Caesar, while it throbs with the passionate monotheism of the Jew: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," such has been the impression which Jesus has created in redeeming men from sin that His followers cannot help setting Him beside God Himself as the Lord of their lives and as the Lord of the universe and of all its history.

These early Christians did not sit down and reason out the question: "Is Jesus human? or is He both human and Divine?" They had been laid hold on by the message of His cross and triumph; they had given themselves to Him as their Saviour; they had tested and proved His transforming power in the midst of the soiling life of these Asian cities; they knew what He had meant to them and theirs. Instinctively they found themselves adoring Him, giving Him a trust, a love, an homage, which left nothing loftier to offer to God himself. They realized that either they were idolators, or that Jesus belonged on the throne, King of kings and Lord of lords. Their acknowledgement was the spontaneous response to their experience of His saving power. He had taken the throne of their hearts by His love. Like Isaac Watts, when

they surveyed His wondrous cross, and appreciated what He had done for them, love so amazing demanded and gained their soul, their life, their all.

It may not be fair to say that Jesus' humanity is totally effaced. There is a suggestive phrase which unconsciously connects His human experience with His present Lordship of the redeemed: "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd." A lamb become a shepherd! He who had known the helplessness of life in the earth—the need for care and guidance, the assaults of foes and the agony of a tortured death—He by His experience is fitted to be the Shepherd of a flock now harried by persecutors, and to be their Shepherd still when they have passed through this great tribulation and find themselves where they hunger and thirst no more.

But apart from an occasional touch like this, the Jesus of the gospels is scarcely recognizable. Look at the figure of One "like unto a son of man" in the opening vision:

> His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow [symbol that He is eternal, like the Ancient of days]; and His eyes were as a flame of fire [piercing in insight]; and His feet like unto burnished brass, as it had been refined in a furnace [an image of dazzling brilliancy]; and His voice as the voice of many waters; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

That Figure may awe us, and like the seer on Patmos we may fall at His feet as dead. But the friendly Jesus, who wishes not abject slaves but congenial comrades, has been obliterated. Had we to choose between the Christ on any page of the gospels and this Figure of John's vision, there can be no question of our choice. It is the Jesus of history, not the Jesus of devout imagination, who holds our hearts.

But this is not to say that we would lightly part with

this picture, provided we use it as a supplement to other New Testament portraits of our Lord. For it is rich in its interpretations of the meaning of Christ to Christians.

Look at its delineation of Him as the Saviour to whom all of us in the churches owe our redemption. "Unto Him that loveth us"—one is glad that the correct reading is a present not a past tense, "loveth" not "loved". There is no more poignant and pathetic word than the verb "to love" in a past tense. "He loved" and stopped loving or something ended His power to love? No, He "loveth" through death itself. This frank-spoken seer had unpalatable truths to tell these churches, and tells them without mincing his words. He does his best to let them know what Christ thinks of them. But back of Christ's thought is His heart. He may not *think* well of us. How can He and be honest? He never ceases to *love* well.

"Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood." Does that mean that Jesus paid His blood to God in order to buy forgiveness? John speaks of "the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world." Vicarious sacrifice is no afterthought in the scheme of things, no contrivance to patch up a hopeless situation. It is not a novelty introduced by Jesus. It is part of the fabric of the universe, inherent in the nature of existence, an obligation which God took upon Himself when He risked creating a world. God gives Himself for His creatures; He always has and always will; even as Jesus gave Himself for many at Golgotha. The death of Christ does not change God's attitude towards His children; from the foundation of the world God is love. The cross was born in God's mind and comes from God's heart. It is the supreme revelation of the character of Him who is the First and the Last. Then why "blood"? Deliverance from evil, loosing from sins, costs. God has always known that, and met the cost. Jesus shared with the Father the full

measure of costly sacrifice at Calvary, and "loosed us from our sins by His blood".

"And He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father." We can find all the faults of the seven churches of Asia in the churches of today; and we are familiar with most of them in ourselves. But the fact remains that Christ is dependent upon you and me to continue His task. He walks among the flickering candles doing His utmost to keep them alight, for apart from these churches the world is dark. The iniquities of each church are frankly told, but the message to each ends with a heartening: "To him that *overcometh* will I give." This is the portrait for Christians of a confident Christ. He is sure that in desperate situations there will be overcoming Christians.

With baffling problems, with engulfing luxury, with chilling indifference, all about us, do we not need this unhesitating and assured picture of our Lord?

Again, look at this interpretation of Jesus and history. Clio, the muse of history, is usually portrayed with a very sober face. And she may well be. George Gissing makes Henry Ryecroft say: "If historic tomes had a voice, it would sound as one long moan of anguish". That is an exaggeration, but what must history have seemed like to these small groups of Christians in the face of imperial Rome? What did it seem like a few years ago to mothers and wives in many lands when suddenly their boys were demanded for the battle-lines? What is the key to history? How shall we explain these tidal movements of races and nations? What is the meaning of human life? What is it to end in? "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" "Worthy"—that is the Jewish contribution. History has a moral clue, and it is not cleverness but character that can explain and control it.

After listening to the inaugural lecture of Professor

Stubbs in the history chair at Oxford, J. R. Green sat down and wrote to his fellow-historian Freeman that Stubbs had drawn

> the old simple lesson that the world's history led up to God, that modern history was but the broadening of His light in Christ. I remember when this was my clue to history once—I am afraid I have lost it without gaining another.

At the moment our world is supremely wistful for a new spirit. We have gloried, and not without reason, in vast scientific advances which have marvellously altered the externals of life. But the demand of the hour is for inner transformations, for characters adequate to manage these hugely augmented forces. And when the wisest of our day try to describe what this wished-for spirit is, in inter-racial and international relations, in industry, in education, they give us something surprisingly reminiscent of a Life lived nineteen centuries ago.

One of those who represented our country at Versailles during the long and difficult discussions which led up to the Treaty, told me that in those trying weeks the thought often occurred to him: "If only these statesmen would approach our questions resolved to be guided by the Spirit of Christ, most of our obstacles would speedily vanish". And as he surveyed the work in retrospect, he could not help feeling that the absence of that Spirit was the chief cause of the unsatisfactory results.

In an odd combination of words John hears Jesus saying: "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star." There in one picture are the soil and the skies; a root embedded in the ground of the past, a star heralding the morning. Jesus sums up the best that has been; He is the flower of a long spiritual development. He is also the harbinger of a new era. And all this because of His character: "He is worthy."

And when we look at the climax of this book where human society is wedded to Christ, ruled by His spirit for He is on the throne, filled with His faith for He is the temple, luminous with His love for He is its light, is there any worthier goal for human striving? How will you read the long story of our world's evolution, from the slime to man, from the most primitive types of men up to the most socially-minded and spiritual, with any more reasonable interpretation, than that the consummation is this Christ-ruled society?

And is not John correct when he makes this consummation the sequel of a desperate conflict? Is not the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of the slain Lamb, at grips with the forces of selfishness? And for every man of us is this not the issue which we must decide, and decide again and again, on which side we will battle? "They also shall overcome that are with Him, called and chosen and faithful."

And when we ask ourselves what is the ultimate future to which we personally look forward, whether we picture the ideal commonwealth in John's imagery of a new Jerusalem or sketch it with other scenery, can we put it more convincingly or more alluringly than in his simple sentences?

> His servants shall serve Him—[a life of usefulness]. And they shall see His face—[a life of companionship]. And His name shall be in their foreheads—[a life for men of manifest Christlike character.]

A commonwealth wedded to Christ, inhabited by serviceable and friendly Christlike folk—that is the end to which the whole creation moves.

Is it surprising that a book which sets forth this portrait of a hoped-for victorious Christ concludes with passionate

cries for His speedy triumph? As one would expect of this imaginative seer, he pictures it spectacularly:

> Behold, He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him. Even so, Amen.

Granted that this is poetry, not prose, such a dramatic scene voices an abiding conviction of Christian minds that sooner or later our faith will be publicly vindicated. Nor is this an airy hope ungrounded in experience. In our own day have we not seen an advent in judgment, when those who trusted in brute force and scouted the principles of the Lamb have been shown up as incapable of giving us a world fit to live in? Passage after passage in this highly imaginative book has seemed to describe some aspect of the lurid happenings which befell our generation. And a great wistfulness has come upon us to have sight of that Christ-ruled society to which this portrait keys our hope. The longing cries with which the book closes find an echo in our desires: "And the Spirit and the bride say 'Come.'" A Church eagerly expecting Christ's entrance into and control of His world infects those who listen to her message with a like yearning: "And he that heareth, let him say, Come". And from within the heavenly world, where the holy city waits, this seer hears Christ with equal eagerness, saying: "Behold, I come quickly".

One may say cynically that this was John's fancy, a delusion evidenced by the long intervening centuries.

> So trust the men whose hope for the world
> Is ever that the world is near its end:
> Impatient of the stars that keep their course
> And make no pathway for the coming Judge.

Or one may say that "quickly" has little to do with our measures of time. John was right in thinking Christ as

eager, yes, more eager than the best of men, to see the Divine purpose come to pass. And if there are laws of spiritual advance which he did not interpret as clearly as did Jesus in His parables, is it not also possible that you and I delay the advent of the heavenly city by our lack of confident and indomitable hope? Do we not need to have on our lips an expectant prayer, like John Milton's, when he was a secretary to the government of Puritan Britain:

> Come forth out of Thy royal chamber, O Prince of all the kings of the earth; put on the visible robes of Thine imperial majesty; take up that unlimited sceptre which Thine Almighty Father hath bequeathed to Thee; for now the voice of Thy bride calls Thee; and all creatures sigh to be renewed?

Yes, does not this portrait of One worthy by His redemptive love to unlock the destiny of our world and bring in the waiting ideals of God awaken in us this seer's resolve to open life wherever we touch it for His admission, answering the wistfulness of an eager Christ with our cordial response: "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus"?

CHAPTER VIII

THE PORTRAIT IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

It is generally thought that this portrait of Jesus was drawn in the region about Ephesus at the close of the First Century. It was drawn for men who already knew something about Him. Paul had preached in this district and had written to it the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians, in which he paints Jesus as the glorified Lord who dwells spiritually in His followers. By this time, too, the Gospel according to Mark with its picture of Jesus was known, for our evangelist uses it, and quite likely the Gospel according to Luke was circulating in this region. The beloved disciple, as this artists's name is signed on this canvas, whether by himself or by some student of his (and it would seem less immodest if another spoke of him as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"), takes Paul's conception of the spiritual Christ, alive in Christian hearts, and selecting from Mark and Luke and from other traditions, sayings and doings of Jesus, His Self-sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection, gives an interpretation of them in the light of his own mature religious experience.

This is not another biography of the Jesus who had lived and taught and died in Palestine. There was no need of duplicating what his public already possessed. This is a devotional meditation on Christ in the spiritual experience of the beloved disciple to bring men to believe in Him as the Son of God and to have life "in His name." John is not looking back, but looking in. He is not

thinking so much of what Jesus did, as of what He does; not so much of what He said as of what He is saying; not so much of what Jesus was in Galilee and Judæa as of what He is in the lives of believers in Ephesus. Browning makes our evangelist say:

> To me that story—ay, that Life and Death
> Of which I wrote "it was"—to me, it is:
> —Is, here and now.

The places which he mentions—the pools of Bethesda and of Siloam, Aenon near to Salim, the Upper Room in Jerusalem, are located in the soul as well as on the map; they belong not only to geography but to spiritual biography.

To interpret Jesus to folk in Asia Minor in his day our evangelist uses current ideas. One is that of the Reason or Word of God, through which the earth was created an orderly world. People talked about the Logos then, as they talk about Evolution today. John asks: "Would you know the Reason and Word of God by which worlds are made? That Word became flesh in Jesus. Let me tell you what He says to, and does for, and is in, those who obey Him." Symbolism was popular with thinkers in that age. Our artist uses it constantly. Siloam is "by interpretation Sent," so the pool becomes a picture of the Godsent Christ. From the side of the Crucified flow water and blood—symbolized in the Christian sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Every miracle is recorded to introduce its symbolic meaning: water turned to wine—Christ's transformation of the common to the festive; multitudes fed with loaves and fishes—Christ the Bread of life; a man born blind given sight—Christ the Light of the world; Lazarus long dead raised again—Christ the resurrection and the life. He sees in miracles "acted parables." Nor is this true only of a few events in Jesus' history: His entire career from birth through

death is a symbol of God's eternal life, so that he who has seen Jesus has seen the Father.

Obviously this is not another portrait of the historic Jesus to be classed with those in our first three gospels. In the conversation with Nicodemus Jesus is made to speak of Himself as "the Son of man *which is in heaven.*" It is history, but the history of Jesus in the mind and heart of the beloved disciple. To be sure there are historical details in which this portrait supplements and even corrects the earlier pictures. Mark mentions but one journey to Jerusalem, while John speaks of several; but Mark reports Jesus as saying "O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together," and makes Him intimate with persons there, like the man from whom the ass is borrowed for the public entry and the goodman of the house where He plans to keep the passover. According to the earlier gospels the length of Jesus' ministry was a single year; but John makes it cover nearly three years. According to the other evangelists the Lord's Supper was part of the paschal meal; according to John the crucifixion occurred on the day when the paschal lamb was slain. And in these respects most scholars think him more accurate. But historic detail is not his main interest. He is a theologian rather than an historian. While Mark begins his narrative of Jesus at the Jordan, and Matthew and Luke with genealogies and a birth in Bethlehem, John begins in eternity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

Nor does he report the exact words of Jesus or of his other characters. On these pages John the Baptist, Jesus, the disciples, the evangelist himself, all have the same mode of thought and the same style of speech. We cannot tell in any conversation, like that with Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman, where Jesus stops and where the evangelist begins. He is giving us the sense rather than

the words, and is interpreting the meaning for his readers. No doubt many of his picturesque metaphors—the good shepherd, the vine, the corn of wheat, the bread, the living water, the Father's house, came from Jesus Himself; but John does not transcribe a single one of His parables. He makes Jesus say: "The hour cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but shall tell you plainly of the Father." He is making Jesus' meaning plain to his readers. What he gives us is not the saying as it came to him, but as it has lain in his mind for years with all its gathered significance. He believes in a Christ who had "yet many things to say" and had promised that His indwelling Spirit would lead His followers into truth. The conversations which he records are those of Christ speaking "in the Spirit" and unfolding His meaning to men in other circumstances and in another age from those to whom He first spoke in Galilee and Jerusalem.

The Jesus portrayed in the earliest preaching is "hid" in the heavens into which He has been received until a dramatic return from the clouds. The first disciples had expected this to occur very soon. Paul had written: "We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord," evidently anticipating the advent in his life-time. The beloved disciple believes that Paul was right; but instead of making Jesus speak of a spectacular return on the clouds, he interprets Him as coming spiritually to abide in His followers' hearts: "I will not leave you orphans: I come unto you. Yet a little while and the world beholdeth Me no more; but ye behold Me because I live, and ye shall live also." And who will say that the beloved disciple did not give us a true interpretation, one that is thoroughly in harmony with the mind of Jesus, in this matter, although he does not give either the exact picture or the precise words which Jesus used?

The most striking difference between the Jesus who speaks to us in this portrait and the Jesus who teaches us

from the other gospels, is that in them He speaks usually of the kingdom, while in this He speaks of Himself. In John alone occur all the saying which begin with "I am." This is not to say that the beloved disciple is introducing a new emphasis upon Jesus Himself. In Mark, Jesus asks "Who say ye that I am?" and in Matthew we have the invitation, "Come unto Me, and I will give you." But John's experience, influenced by the experience of Paul, has made Jesus Himself central in the Christian life. Jesus' words are spirit and life to those who obey them. but the main point is to focus one's thought and trust on Jesus Himself: I am the living Bread, the Light of the world, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way and the Truth, the Vine. Sometimes the words "I am" occur just by themselves: "If ye do not believe that I am, ye shall die in your sins." "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am." The meaning is plain: "I am the decisive personality." As we read the discussions of Jesus with "the Jews" (as this evangelist called His opponents) —a strange title to give those who were with Him in the flesh, for He a Jew of the Jews rarely spoke with any of another race—His words sound harsh and sharp. If we think of "the Jews" as the Jewish antagonists of Christianity a generation later, and if we think of Christ's insistence upon acceptance of Himself as a result of this beloved disciple's mature experience, we understand the situation far better. Indeed, we know in our own experience the fatal consequences of disputing with Christ and turning our backs upon Him. And we also know that the beloved disciple is stating sober fact when he makes Jesus say: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," and adds the comment, "He that believeth on Me, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit."

From the first page to the last this gospel pictures Jesus

as the Son of God, the Only-Begotten, witnessed as Divine by the Baptist, by the Scriptures, by His works, by His words, and by the testimony of the Father. He omits from the portrait altogether those scenes in which Jesus appears most a Man dependent upon Divine help: the Baptism, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, Gethsemane. At its climax Thomas addresses Him: "My Lord and my God." But no evangelist takes more pains to emphasize Jesus' humanity. John's readers were of two classes: Christians who believed in His divinity and were in danger of not thinking Jesus a true Man, and non-Christians for whom He was nothing but an impostor. For these Christians John insists the Word was made "flesh," that Jesus prayed, that He actually died and was buried. The heresy of that age was that a Spirit had shown Himself in Jesus, but had ascended back to heaven before the crucifixion. John alone records that Jesus was wearied on a journey, wept at a friend's grave, and in the agony of death cried "I thirst." But even so, in this portrait heavenly splendor constantly flashes upon the earthly scene: "This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory." "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God and goeth into God" rises from supper and washes His disciples' feet. The beloved disciple is telling us how Jesus' acts appear to him—He is in the flesh, but we behold His glory. And our evangelist would have his readers see it and believe.

It is plain that we should not turn first to this gospel when we wish to know what Jesus did and said. We turn first to the three other evangelists. But here is a pioneering thinker who dares to take Jesus out of the past because he is sure that He belongs to the ages, to discard the forms of Jesus' thought and speech which obscure Him from the men of a later day, to use the experience of a great Christian like Paul and his own experience to inter-

pret Jesus, and who sets Him in the midst of a new generation that they may see and hear Him as their contemporary. And John did his task so skilfully that subsequent centuries have not felt that he altered Jesus in his portrait. They place this picture side by side with the other three, as a correct likeness of their Master. It may seem difficult to think that He who certainly said: "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" actually meant: "I am the Light of the world," yet not only Christians but Jews acknowledge that this is so.

From the Zionist colony in Jerusalem, a most learned scholar, Dr. Joseph Klausner, has written in modern Hebrew for his fellow-Jews a biography of Jesus, in which, after exalting Jesus as an ethical teacher unparalleled in "sublimity, distinctiveness and originality," and an artist in parables, he concludes that Judaism was right in rejecting Him because His teaching is too inclusive and too ideal to be the basis for Jewish nationalism.

John correctly understands Jesus' meaning when he writes: "God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish."

And what a service John rendered when he drew the portrait of Jesus against the background of the thinking of his readers' time, instead of in the setting of Jesus' own day! It may well be that Jesus Himself never heard of the Logos or Word. That was an idea current among philosophers in Alexandria. It is almost certain that He never thought of anything symbolical in the pool of Siloam. But John saw that the only essential thing was the Spirit of Jesus—the Spirit of His teaching, His works, His cross; and that Spirit he has made persuasively plain in this portrait. Jesus belongs not to the First Century, but to all time. Each generation must form its own picture of Him—not a different Jesus from the Man of Nazareth,

but the same Jesus alive in and speaking to the men of our day.

And John supplied an essential need when he drew this portrait in which Jesus speaks of our personal relations to Him. We would not forego one of His parables of the kingdom of God; but the disciples who first listened to them had Jesus with them and understood what He said in the light of what He did and was. The stories of the Mustard Seed and of the Leaven, or even those of the Good Samaritan and of the Prodigal Son, would not move us as they do, if we detached them from Jesus Himself. It is because we think of Him as speaking them, and as illustrating them, the very embodiment of His message—Himself the Good Samaritan who rescues helpless humanity and Himself an Elder Brother who goes into the far country to bring back at the cost of His blood the straying son of the Father—that they capture our hearts. The beloved disciple sets us face to face with Jesus Himself, and makes Him say to us, "I am the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Vine. Abide in Me, and I in you." And when we wish this personal intercourse with Jesus we instinctively turn to this Gospel, and especially to the words spoken in the Upper Room, and find Jesus opening His inmost heart to us, and claiming us as His friends.

And John has shown sublime skill—inspired skill—in phrasing the message of Jesus. Could we pay a higher tribute than this when we say that we cannot tell what are Jesus' own words and what are those of His beloved disciple? Listen to a few of them:

> God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.
>
> Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
>
> Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.

I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself.

In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

In these words we hear the authentic voice of Jesus Himself—the Jesus whom we trust and love and (to some degree) know in our own experience—but no one can tell how many and which of the words were uttered by Jesus in the flesh, and which come from His Spirit in the heart and mind of this beloved disciple. Had ever a writer a more difficult task than this evangelist undertook? And was ever any more certainly led of the Spirit and more supremely a creative artist, making the Jesus who spoke in his soul speak to all subsequent centuries?

John's method is not to attempt a proportioned biography—a fifth of his material is set in a single scene on one evening in the Upper Room—but to present a series of pictures in each of which Jesus is the central Figure—the Lamb of God to whom the Baptist points his disciples; the living Water incomparably better than that which the woman seeks at Jacob's well; the Bread of God symbolized in the loaves which satisfy thousands and which nourish permanently, unlike the manna Moses gave to famishing Israel; the Crucified who lays down His own life, bears His own cross to the place of execution, and is glorified in dying. Every detail in each scene is so carefully subordinated that we never take our eyes off Christ. Our artist does not waste a stroke of his brush on the minor characters. Judas not Iscariot, for example, is

merely a label for a question—a question which has arisen in the minds of those with whom John has talked, and, without spending a moment describing this Judas, he uses him to bring his readers' perplexity straight to Jesus. The Greeks who came to Philip are not described. We should like to know where and what they had heard of this Prophet in Israel; but to John their plea, "Sir, we would see Jesus," is just the inquiry of many wistful folk, and like Philip and Andrew he hurries off to Jesus Himself and lets Him speak. Every character in his narrative must, like the Baptist, decrease that Christ may increase. Indeed not only are details not allowed to detain us from Jesus, but they are themselves most cleverly used to suggest Him. The pool at Bethesda, so tantalizing to that man who had been thirty-eight weary years waiting and with no one to help him in, becomes a contrast to the ever accessible and immediately healing Jesus. The cynical remark of Caiaphas that "it is expedient that one man should die for the people," at once hints at Jesus' vicarious death and is made a prophecy. In no other picture are we as continuously faced with Jesus Himself. Like certain portraits, so drawn that from whatever angle one views them the face and eyes follow us and look straight at us, the Jesus on John's pages is always dealing directly with ourselves.

And yet, while Jesus Himself dominates every scene, this evangelist wishes us to look at Him and listen to Him only because through Him we are looking at and listening to another. For this beloved disciple Jesus is the Way, but he would not have himself or his readers remain forever *en route*. Those who stay on the road are just tramps. The Way leads home and home is the Father's heart. In no other portrait are we so constantly aware in and through the Figure before us of an unseen Presence.

The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing.

My Father giveth you the true Bread out of heaven.

If ye knew Me, ye would know My Father also.

No one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.

The Father abiding in Me doeth His works.

I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

O righteous Father, the world knew Thee not, but I knew Thee; and these knew that Thou didst send Me, and I made known unto them Thy name, and will make it known.

And this supreme "making known" takes place when Jesus hangs on the cross. He goes to His death praying: "Father glorify Thy name." And the pictures of the Crucified on these pages—the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, the Son of man lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness, the good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep—the pictures are there that through them we may look at the Father, whose heart toward the world they disclose, whose name at Golgotha is "glorified" and "made known"—and that name is Love.

No portrait more appropriately sums up the ultimate meaning of Jesus for Christians. The human Life which began at Bethlehem is the unveiling of the life of God. We do not prize for its own sake the career of Jesus in the years of His flesh—inestimably valuable as are His teachings and His character and His example; but these have their supreme worth for us because what Jesus was, His and our Father is from everlasting to everlasting. And what Jesus means to us in our present experiences, where

He is the Life and Light of our souls, explains for us the secret of the universe. He is our clue to the whole scheme of things. To be His friends, sharing His sympathies and purpose, is to live, to live abundantly, to live eternally. In Him is life and the life is the light of men.

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